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Oliver Cromwell

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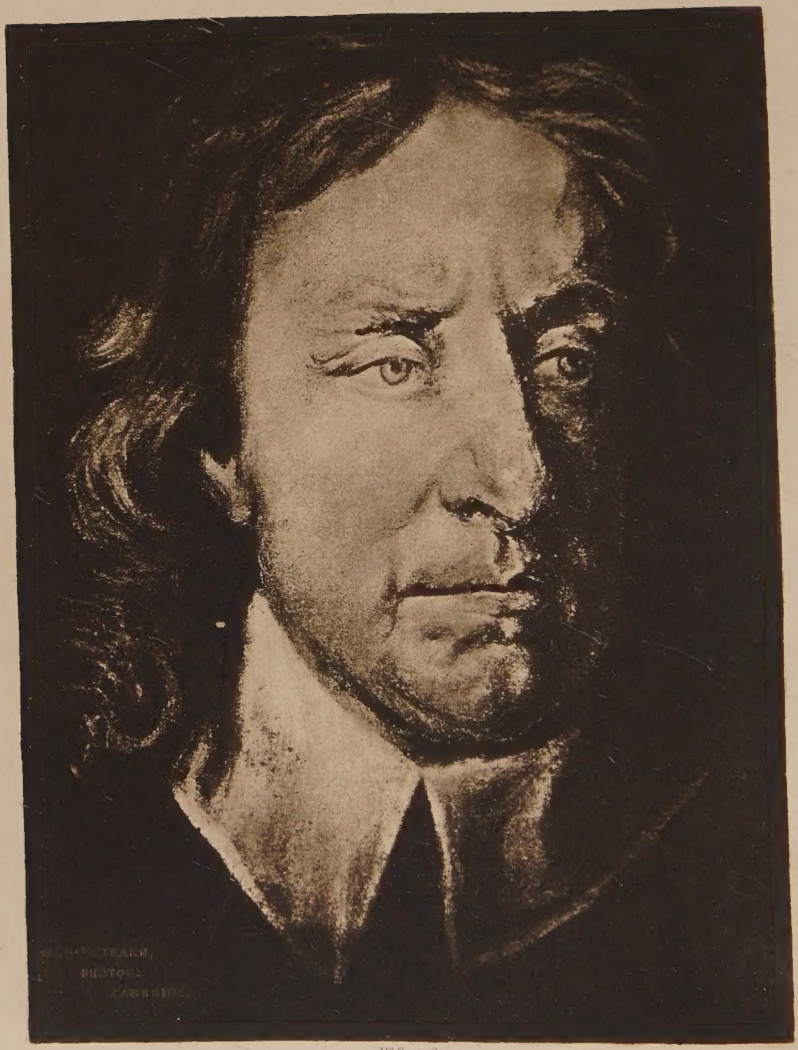

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Oliver Cromwell

His Life and Character

BY

ARTHUR PATERSON

AUTHOR OF "CROMWELL'S OWN," "THE GOSPEL WRIT IN STEEL," "FOR FREEDOM'S SAKE," ETC. ETC.

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PREFACE

The writer bold enough to attempt a Biography of Cromwell in these days of voluminous Cromwell literature is in somewhat the same position as an Alpine climber proposing to read a paper to the Royal Geographical on an ascent of Mont Blanc. Nevertheless, the Author of the present work ventures, without apology, to follow where Carlyle, Gardiner, and Firth have led. The object of this book is to give a narrative of the personal life, aims, and motives of this great Englishman; any "history of the time" has been studiously avoided. Cromwell, and Cromwell alone, with what Cromwell did, and tried to do, and was—this is the theme. The world, much as it has read of Cromwell, is still lamentably ignorant of his real character. This is not surprising, for the number of works which give an ungarbled statement of facts upon this disputed point may be counted upon the fingers of one hand.

The two portraits in the volume have been carefully chosen. The frontispiece is the well-known Sidney

Sussex portrait, reproduced by Messrs. Stearn of Cambridge. The other, a likeness of Mrs. Cromwell, the Protector's mother, I was fortunate enough to obtain through the kindness of the possessor of the original picture, Mrs. Steward of Leamington.

ARTHUR PATERSON.

Mrs CROMWELL

OLIVER CROMWELL

HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER

CHAPTER I

It has been a time-honoured custom of biographers to introduce their heroes by a string of carefully selected anecdotes of early youth, which, whether authenticated or not, all contain some remarkable presage of their future greatness. Cromwell has suffered in this way more than most people; for not only are the stories about him, which have been handed down religiously for generations, neither true nor kind, but they have not the saving grace of being characteristic. The reason for this is not far to seek. Cromwell, of all the public men who have awakened rancorous hatred among large classes of people, has been the least understood by his friends. For good and for evil—but especially for evil—he has been misinterpreted even by historians whose impartiality is above reproach. He was incomprehensible to his contemporaries, bitterly and savagely slandered by his successors, and distrusted by all. In such circumstances every tradition of his youth, unless it is supported by incontestible evidence, must be received with deep suspicion; and as there are no records available to test the stories which have grown up about "the

brewer of Huntingdon"; and as all are of the most trivial nature, and most of them obviously absurd, we will not pollute the memory of a great man or waste our readers' time in repeating them.

It is better, it would seem to us, to look back into Oliver's boyhood in the light of after events, and, taking the few facts we are sure of concerning his home surroundings, imagine his youth for ourselves. A sturdy boy he must have been. In physical strength above the average, and fond of using it. Yet of peaceable nature, kindly to the small and weak, forbearing toward all, but apt now and then when severely provoked to fling himself into a passion of rage, which his companions doubtless considered most unreasonable. A boy of immense energy, who could learn well and quickly when he liked, but whose industry was probably not always to be depended upon; very careless in his dress; awkward in form, with heavy features, and absent eyes. Rather a problem to his master, the Rev. Dr. Beard, of Huntingdon Grammar School.

Oliver had the inestimable advantage of a good mother. No one who appreciates the significance of this and has seen the fine portrait of Mrs. Cromwell, now in the possession of Mrs. Steward of Leamington, can find it hard to believe in Cromwell's steadiness of principle, and in the purity of his private life.

It is the likeness of an old lady, stately and upright in carriage and bearing, with a face remarkable for strength and force of character. From his mother Cromwell inherited his powerfully-moulded nose and chin. Yet in Mrs. Cromwell's eyes there is a suggestion of humour and brightness which we do not find in her son's; and though at first her face looks hard,

this impression leaves the mind at a second glance. A right worthy mother of a son who was to bear the heaviest burden of any Englishman of his time. Under the influence of this mother, whom we know he dearly loved, the boy grew up; and when his sisters married and left the home-nest, the old lady remained with him and his until her death at Whitehall on the 16th November 1654. The day after her death Cromwell's secretary, Thurloe, wrote—

"My Lord Protector's mother of ninety-four years old died last night. A little before her death she gave my Lord her blessing in these words: 'The Lord cause His face to shine upon you; and enable you to do great things for the glory of your Most High God, and to be a relief unto His people. My dear son, I leave my heart with thee. A good night.'"

Beautiful words, worth pondering over if we would understand the inner nature of this son. His mother was no weak and doting old body. Her husband, Robert Cromwell, died when the future Protector was only eighteen years old, and left her a family of eight children to support, upon a patrimony worth in those days about £300 a year: £900 to-day—a patrimony which consisted chiefly of land, and which must have required very careful management. There is no direct evidence of how the family fared until Oliver at one-and-twenty married a wife, and brought her to Huntingdon; but it is certain that all his sisters married well and reputably—an extremely difficult thing to accomplish in those days unless suitable portions were provided them. It is also certain that Elizabeth Bourchier, Oliver's young wife, being the daughter of a City Alderman, Sir Thomas Bourchier, would not under any conceivable circumstances have been allowed to wed

a man who had wasted his substance in debauchery or extravagant living. Yet the old biographies teem with insinuations of this kind. Some descend into nauseous particulars. "Let us give them decent burial." The more closely the surroundings and circumstances of Cromwell's youth are examined, the more transparently absurd appear these stories of vice and riotousness. He was brought up in a pure and healthy home by a mother of strong nature and tender affection. He was entered at sixteen years old as a student at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, and had only been there a year when his father died, and he had to return home to be the mainstay and comfort of his widowed mother and sisters, for he was the only son. Such crises are the making of strong, affectionate natures. The notion that Cromwell, emancipated from control, plunged into wild dissipation, is wildly improbable. Not a word against his morality in after life has ever been breathed. Besides, had he done this his mother must have been reduced to extreme poverty, which was not the case, or, as has been said, her daughters could never have married well. Most significant of all, however, is the fact already mentioned, that Cromwell married at one-and-twenty into a Puritan family thoroughly acquainted with him and his. That alone is enough to refute the whole contention—if any one is still disposed to seriously maintain it.

In social position Cromwell, as most people are now aware—though it is astonishing how hard it is to kill an evil tradition—belonged to what we clumsily call "the upper middle-class." In other words, though he saw no shame in farming his own land, going to market on his own account, and even admitting his field labourers to a degree of friendship that has made gentility—false

gentility—make grimaces ever since; yet his father was the cadet of an old house, and his coat-of-arms was as good as that of the proudest "county family" at the present day. At Hinchinbrook, the fine old mansion now owned by the Earl of Sandwich, lived Cromwell's uncle and namesake, Sir Oliver Cromwell, the head of the house, in great state and dignity as the Knight of the Shire; while Robert, Oliver's father, the knight's younger brother, seems to have been a good type of the Puritan squire of the day. He is described as "a gentleman of good sense and competent learning; of a great spirit, but without any ambition; regular in his habits, reserved and somewhat proud. He served on local bodies. A steadfast and worthy man."

The date of Cromwell's marriage is known to us, being in the list of marriages in the register of St. Giles' Church, Cripplegate, the 22nd August 1620.

"Oliver Cromwell to Elizabeth Bourchier, 22." He was just of age, being born on the 25th of April 1599.

It was an early marriage, and they had many children; and "for richer, for poorer," they were true to one another till death.

Yet it appears to us very doubtful whether this daughter of a City Alderman was fitted by nature or mind to be Cromwell's mate and give him that support and comfort which, with all its strength, his affectionate and emotional nature sorely needed. A shrewd woman Mrs. Cromwell undoubtedly was, with eyes sharp enough to see, and spirit great enough to remind her lord and master, when he did not fulfil his duties to her satisfaction; but her power of sympathy and of unselfish affection appear to have been limited. This matter has

so important a bearing upon Cromwell's character, that it is worth quoting a letter typical of others that have been found, which his wife wrote to him in December 1650. The Scotch campaign was drawing to a close. Dunbar had been fought three months before, the Castle at Edinburgh had yielded within the last week, England was ringing with accounts of "the Lord General's" victories. Yet Cromwell himself was oppressed by deep anxieties and ill-health. Charles the Second still held court at Stirling; Scotland, north of the Firth, was unconquered; the expense of providing for the English army was enormous; and there was little money anywhere. Worst of all, he was beginning to sicken with an ague, which later nearly cost him his life. As far back as September we hear of him telling his wife that he felt "the infirmities of age marvellously stealing upon me." Mrs. Cromwell, therefore, must have known that her husband's life was no bed of roses, and that the work he had to do was never-ceasing. In the light of these facts her letter seems to us significant of many things.[1]

"Cockpit, London, *December* 27, 1650.

"My Dearest,—I wonder you should blame me for writing no oftener, when I have sent three for one; I cannot but think they are miscarried. Truly if I know my own heart, I should as soon neglect myself as to 'omit' the least thought toward you, who, in doing it, I must do it to myself. But when I do write, my Dear, I seldom have any satisfactory answer; which makes me think my writing is slighted, as well it may; but I cannot but think your love covers my weakness and infirmities.

[1] Carlyle, Part vi. p. 247.

"I should rejoice to hear your desire in seeing me; but I desire to submit to the Providence of God; hoping the Lord, who hath separated us, and hath often brought us together again, will, in His own good time, bring us again to the praise of His name. Truly my life is but half a life in your absence, did not the Lord make it up in Himself, which I must acknowledge to the praise of His grace.

"I would you would think to write sometimes to your dear friend, my Lord Chief Justice, of whom I have often put you in mind. And truly, my Dear, if you would think of what I put you in mind of some, it might be to as much purpose as others; writing sometimes a Letter to the President, and sometimes to the Speaker. Indeed, my Dear, you cannot think the wrong you do yourself in the want of a Letter, though it were but seldom. I pray think on; and so rest,

"Yours in all faithfulness,

"ELIZABETH CROMWELL."

It is a clever letter, despite its grammar. We must remember that the women of that day, with a few exceptions, spelt and wrote most abominable English. A letter worthy of study by those who would try to understand the inner workings of Cromwell's private life. There is affection in it undoubtedly, but not a touch of real tenderness, or that sympathetic insight into what *he* may be thinking, and enduring, and doing.

Cromwell was, as has been said, incessantly occupied and oppressed by harassing duties and the hardest work. Difficulties and dangers, political and military, had to be faced every day. The calls upon his time and energies were innumerable. Yet his wife does not think of this.

Instead, she throws out the peevish remark, "I seldom have any satisfactory answer; which makes me think my writing is slighted." A woman with a little mind; good and true and intelligent doubtless, but of narrow sympathies and tepid nature. To realise the difference between her nature and Cromwell's we have only to read a letter of his, dated 3rd May, one of two written within a month of one another.

[1] "To my beloved Wife, Elizabeth Cromwell, at the Cockpit: These—

"EDINBURGH, 3 *May* 1651.

"MY DEAREST,—I could not satisfy myself to omit this post, although I have not much to write; yet indeed I love to write to my Dear, who is very much in my heart. It joys me to hear thy soul prospereth; the Lord increase His Favours to thee more and more. The great good thy Soul can wish is, That the Lord lift upon thee the light of His countenance, which is better than life. The Lord bless all thy good council and example to all those about thee, and hear all thy prayers, and accept thee always.

"I am glad to hear thy Son and Daughter are with thee. I hope thou wilt have some good opportunity of good advice to him. Present my duty to my Mother, my love to all the Family. Still pray for, Thine,

"OLIVER CROMWELL."

The man who could write this had infinite depths of tenderness in his nature; but it was a nature which would suffer if it did not receive a return in kind.

Let us now return to Cromwell's early married life.

[1] Carlyle, Part vi., Letter clxxiii., p. 273.

We know nothing of it in detail; but there are authentic records that before many years had passed he had become very hypochondriacal, and subject to fits of extreme melancholia, seizures which recurred at intervals through life. It would seem to us possible that these "phansies"—and much of that harshness which grew upon him in later years—were due to a sense of isolation acting upon a highly emotional temperament. It was not merely the loneliness of a man of genius whose companion for life was moulded from the commonplace, but that far keener misfortune, the man with strong craving for a sympathy and understanding which only a certain kind of woman can give. In spite of all Cromwell's self-reliance in great crises of public affairs or in battle, at other times he was essentially a man who could be deeply influenced by those he trusted and loved. Had he been blessed with a helpmate as great-souled as himself, who entered fully and earnestly into all his thoughts and doubts and difficulties, who was ready with sympathy and perfect faith to calm his darker hours, brighten his sad moods, rejoice in his success, and, at the same time, check with a true woman's firm good sense the extravagance of his fervent emotionalism, is it too much to hope that he would have been a better and a greater man even than he showed himself to be, and that "Drogheda" and "Wexford" would not have borne the dread significance which connects them with his name?

With his children Cromwell was always on terms of tender intimacy. He had nine: the eldest, Robert, born in 1621, died at eighteen years old; the next, Oliver, born 1622–3, rose to be captain of a troop, but died, it is supposed, of smallpox, before the end of the war. Bridget, afterwards Ireton's wife, came next, in 1624.

She appears to have been a clever woman, of not too amiable a temper, with her father's brains but her mother's nature. Richard, the future Protector, was Bridget's junior by two years. The accounts of his character and disposition show him to be made of very different stuff from his father. Carlyle calls him "an idle triviality." Cromwell frequently chided him for want of diligence and seriousness, and never entrusted him with any position of responsibility. At the same time he was clearly very fond of the boy, who must have been of a lovable disposition, and, withal, manly and spirited; enemy to none but himself; liked by all except the strictest sect of Puritans. Richard lived to be eighty-six years old. Henry, the fourth son, born January 1627–8, was a Cromwell in something more than name. He bore arms in the war, though only fifteen when it began, and was appointed deputy in Ireland in 1657, two years before his father's death. He, also, lived long after the king enjoyed his own again, and, with the rest of his family, seems to have suffered very little from being the son of a regicide, a fact to be remembered to the credit of Charles the Second.

The flower of the family, however, was the next in age, Elizabeth (Betty) Claypole. She was but thirteen when the Royal Standard was raised at Nottingham in 1642, and when the Protectorate was established in 1654 was in the full bloom of her womanhood. Her husband, John Claypole, of Norborough, near Market Deeping, Northamptonshire, was a man of harmless, amiable character, but no particular individuality; at least if he were, no records have come down to us. They married when Betty was only sixteen, and lived with Cromwell at Whitehall after he became Protector.

In this life—the life of a court, yet not a court—"the Lady Elizabeth Claypole" reigned, a young, but acknowledged, queen. She must have possessed much of her father's adaptability and tolerance of disposition, together with a happy immunity from her sister Bridget's sharpness of temper and tongue. Also in her nature there seems to have been both refinement and brightness, foreign to her father's.

The position of the women of the Protector's household must have been peculiarly trying. But in spite of a few ill-natured comments here and there they seem to have held their own remarkably well, an achievement for which the chief credit belongs to the Lady Elizabeth. In her nature, too, lay the quick impulsive sympathy Cromwell needed so sorely. The accounts that have come down to us of the deep affection and intimate understanding which bound them so closely together belong to a later chapter; but it would appear that among the proofs of Mrs. Cromwell's incapacity to appreciate her husband, the most conclusive is the evidence that it was to Betty, not to his wife, that the overburdened Protector, in his failing health and deepening despondency, turned for comfort, rest, and—love.

After Betty a boy was born, James, only to die in a few days. Then, five years later, Mary, February 1636–7. She was only twenty-two years old at her father's death. Two years previously she married Lord Fauconburg, leaving many descendants. Lastly, Frances, a year younger, who married Mr. Rich, grandson of the Earl of Warwick, who had been Lord High Admiral to the Parliament, and was a firm friend of Cromwell's. There are some amusing letters extant with reference to the marriage—how Cromwell disapproved of it, asserting

that young Rich was of loose habits, and how his daughters combined against him, and, producing evidence that Mr. Rich had been maligned, overcame the Lord Protector's opposition, and triumphantly won the day; a story, the kernel of which is that "Oliver P.," who had conquered two high-spirited nations, and was the greatest man in a third, only burnt his fingers when he tried to interfere in a woman's love affairs.

Nine children, and all but two growing to maturity. A heavy family to bring up on very moderate means. It would hardly have been done perhaps without old Mrs. Cromwell's aid, but it was done, and even the Royalist lampooners do not suggest that Cromwell ran into debt, or was ever out at elbows, which a man who had suffered from a debauched youth must have been in such circumstances.

The accounts of Cromwell at this time show him to be a man careless of appearances and entirely wanting in self-consciousness or regard for his neighbours' opinions. One who talked little and spent a good deal of time when not at work—too much time, perhaps—in solitary musings and self-communings, and whose principal study and interest in life was the Bible. Cromwell read his Bible with a vivid sense of reality and absolute belief in the aptness of its teachings and prophecies to the public affairs of his times, and his private life, which no modern Englishman, however much he may try, can really understand. To Cromwell, as to tens of thousands of his contemporaries, the Bible was a guide-book to all the paths trod by a man in every-day life. It was a history of the experiences, thoughts, and beliefs of the greatest people the world had ever seen. More than this, to such as Cromwell, who were drinking in deep draughts of the

politics of the day, and either taking or preparing to take a personal part in the fray, the prayer of the Hebrew prophets and psalmists, their agonised cries to God for help, and the hopelessness of their position, present and future, unless the Almighty would stretch forth His hand and overcome their enemies, together with their absolute faith that God *would* personally interfere, was a counterpart of their own position. History was repeating itself, they thought. Laud and his Ecclesiastical Commissions and canon laws; the Star Chamber, the Benevolences and forced loans of Charles, the corruption at court and the blood-sucking queen's favourites, were all parts of an oppression of the godly by the wicked, which God in His own good time—now not to be long delayed—would overthrow and bring to naught.

Such, very briefly, was the pith of that attitude of mind called "Puritanism." Presbyterians, Independents, Anabaptists, and the rest of the sects, each had their own way of interpreting the events which happened later on, and, as we know, fell out and quarrelled violently. But in the years when Cromwell at Huntingdon and St. Ives worked and prayed with his men, and earnestly studied the Word of God; abasing himself with a shuddering belief in his wickedness, mingled with a curious half-slumbering consciousness of the latent power within him, and a vague fore-knowledge of the struggles that were so soon to come—in these, the first thirty-five years of the seventeenth century, the Puritans were all in accord with one another, with a code of morals and a scheme of life entirely their own. The common supposition that "the Puritan" was always to be known by the sombre hues and peculiar cut

of his dress is erroneous. There was nothing half so self-assertive about the fervent religionist of that day as we are accustomed to see now. But if less noisy, his beliefs were intimately more intense and concentrated. There was war in the air for twenty years before the sword was drawn. The clouds of civil strife gather slowly over a land before they burst. In Cromwell's life, full of hard work and domestic anxiety, and, in the heart of it, this constant searching of the Bible and assimilation of its spirit with practical knowledge of the crises that were taking place in public affairs, is to be found a typical instance of what was passing in half of the homesteads of the land.

Cromwell indeed throughout his life, as Dr. Gardiner so justly points out, was an essentially typical Englishman. Never more so than in early days—self-contained, quiet, and steady-living; calm in exterior, but fermenting inwardly; doing what he had to do in daily duty with all his might; quietly and unconsciously fitting himself for the fate that was to carry him, after infinite labours and vicissitudes, to the foremost place in the land.

CHAPTER II

Cromwell first entered Parliament as Member for Huntingdon in March 1627–8, when he was twenty-nine years old. That he was chosen at such a comparatively early age for so important a post, in spite of the fact that he was not wealthy and that the influence of his family was on the wane, is evidence that his ambition to serve his fellow-men in a public capacity, and the ability to justify it, must have been, even then, well known. In Parliament Cromwell did nothing at first except vote and sit on committees. It was not until February 1628–9, that he made his first speech, a fragment of which, as reported, is still extant. He was member of a "Committee of Religion"—brought into existence to consider the pass to which the bishops were bringing the Church and its ceremonials—and in this capacity Cromwell informed the House "that he had heard by relation from one Dr. Beard, that Dr. Alabaster had preached flat Popery at Paul's Cross, and that the Bishop of Winchester had commanded him as his Diocesan he should preach nothing to the contrary. Mannering, so justly censured in this House for his sermon, was by the same bishop's means preferred to a rich living. If these are the steps to Church-preferment, what can you expect?"

There is nothing remarkable in the speech. But it is worthy of note as significant that religion, not politics, first drew Cromwell into the arena. Though intercourse with men and affairs, and the pressure of

the times made him a great administrator, and a still greater soldier; yet, throughout his life, religion, as he saw it, always took the first place. The repulsion men have felt and still feel against "the hypocrisy of Cromwell" is based upon an utter want of comprehension of the guiding principle, the axle-tree, on which the life and conduct of this man revolved.

Cromwell was never a fanatic; he detested narrowness; he considered that the inquisitorial searchings into other men's consciences, in which the presbyter believed as much if not more than the priest, were unjustifiably impertinent. But in earnest, free religious worship, in giving full opportunity for the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, his heart was as much bound up as that of any minister of any creed. We hear that in the last, and worst, days of Laud's power Cromwell's house was a refuge for distressed preachers of all shades of opinion. We know that as General, as Member of the Long Parliament, as Protector, he risked power, reputation, and even life itself, by steadfastly upholding the toleration of all kinds of true religion, and in his respect for "tender consciences."

This was the noble side of Cromwell's religious belief. But there was another side, hopelessly mistaken, and fraught with direst consequences when translated into action. He interpreted the Bible, as did all Puritans, very literally; and though he never descended to the extravagance of the Fifth Monarchists, yet when he had once made it clear to himself that a certain course was in accordance with the Will of God as expressed in the Scriptures, no consideration of humanity or even common justice would hold him back. This tendency grew upon him with age, and when he was Protector weakened his

foreign policy, and even clouded his keen understanding in home affairs, causing him to be distrusted and hated where he might have been beloved. Yet with it all went absolute sincerity, and few men gained more personal comfort and strength from religion than Cromwell. What a man's religion is really worth to him can only be seen by watching his conduct in times of stress and danger. In Cromwell's case, all through the six weary years of the Civil War, and the still harder times in Ireland and Scotland, to the supreme moment before Dunbar, when bitter and irretrievable disaster was staring him in the face, his simple faith in God, and cheerfulness of spirit when all around him were failing and losing heart, place him in the first rank of the men who have *believed*.

The Parliament of 1628–9 was dissolved by Royal Proclamation after the famous scene wherein Denzil Holles held the Speaker in the chair against his will, and the House passed vigorous resolutions against "Arminianism" in the Church and the illegal taxation of the king. It was the last Parliament Charles called for eleven years.

During those years there were many changes in Cromwell's circumstances. About the year 1631 he sold his property in Huntingdon and removed to St. Ives, where he rented grazing land and bred cattle and sheep. Here he remained until 1636. In January of that year Sir Thomas Steward, his mother's brother, died, leaving his estates and house at Ely solely to his nephew. The family removed to Ely before the summer of that year, and took up their abode at the tithe-barn house; for Sir Thomas had farmed the tithes of Ely for many years, and Cromwell followed him in the business.

This house—called "Cromwell House"—is still standing, the only authentic dwelling-place of Cromwell's which is left to us. Through the courtesy of its present occupier, Mr. Stephen Coxon, we were able to view it room by room. It is a plain, unpretentious brick building of two storeys, with a high gabled roof of brown tiles, looking upon the main road from Cambridge to the north. To the left of the door as one enters is a room of moderate size, panelled with oak to the ceiling, and believed to have been the Cromwell family living room. On the right is another room, used by the present occupier for professional purposes; but in Cromwell's time, probably a square entrance hall. From this hall a passage, dark and narrow, leads to the other parts of the house. A staircase to the left, steep and not too wide, curls spirally to the upper storey; while the passage, striking off at a tangent, curves away in a quaintly irregular fashion to the back premises, kitchen, larder, pantries, &c. On the way to these offices is the room supposed to have been Cromwell's study and library. It is now used as a laboratory, and is a queerly shaped apartment, full of deep cupboards and odd, unexpected corners. The evidence that it was Cromwell's particular room lies in the circumstance that it possessed an outer door, by which the farmers entered to pay their tithes or rent. Up the staircase, half-way to the first floor, is a small landing and a door opening into two rooms, where old Mrs. Cromwell is supposed to have had her private apartments. At the top of the staircase there are six other rooms. Altogether, considering the primitive needs of the time, there must have been ample room for Cromwell's family here. Yet it was an unusually modest edifice for a man whose income, through his uncle's bequest, must have

been nearly £2000 a year. This, however, was extremely characteristic of Cromwell at this time. Though his worst enemies do not accuse him of parsimony—a weakness from which his wife may not have been altogether free—he was utterly indifferent to outward appearances. So long as a house answered to the needs of his family, it would never have occurred to him to add dignity to his station in life by removing to a more pretentious dwelling-place.

In this little house the Cromwell family lived until 1647 or thereabouts, secure from harm within the bounds of the Eastern Counties Association, through all those five bitter years of strife. Of their life at Ely we know nothing. Two of the children, Mary and Frances, were born there; the eldest, Robert, died there; while two others, Bridget and Betty, were married from the house. It was from Ely that Cromwell went up to London in 1640 to attend the Long Parliament; from there, in 1642, he rode away at the head of his first troop to join Lord Essex before Edgehill; in 1644 he journeyed northward from Ely to command the cavalry and win fame at Marston Moor.

A quiet, homely, insignificant house, but filled with memories of that dark and stormy time. If the day ever comes when Englishmen realise all they owe to Cromwell, this house will be prized as a great national possession.

On the 3rd of November 1640 the "Long Parliament" met, and Cromwell took his place once more as a member of the House of Commons, this time representing the town of Cambridge. The clouds that had lowered for so long on the political horizon were gathering to a head. The king was desperately in need of money, and was determined, by any means, to get it. His Parliament was as determined not to vote a penny without guarantees

of sweeping reforms in Church and State, and the removal of all abuses.

First and foremost, they devoted their attention to the reform of the Church. This brought Cromwell to the fore at once. He was on a committee formed to consider the cases of Prynne, Bastwick, and Burton, the best-known victims of ecclesiastical courts. Petitions to the House were presented by him in behalf of other persons mutilated by ear-cropping, nose-slitting, and branding, by the ferocious policy of Laud. Such cases of outrage roused a fury of indignation in Cromwell, which made him a ready abettor of the most extreme measures directed against Prelacy. He did not pause to think what should be built up if the present structure of established ritual were destroyed; or if he did think of it, he did not allow the difficulties of the future to interfere with the present work of destruction. In 1641 he prepared a measure with Vane the younger for the "Abolition of Episcopacy." In the same year he sat on a committee for considering how preaching ministers might best be set up and maintained. But though Cromwell worked hard, thought much, and not infrequently spoke in Parliament, he was in no sense a leader even of the section to which he belonged. He was still serving his apprenticeship; holding his own by the earnestness of his convictions and the force of will and energy which he threw into his speeches, rather than by any eloquence or originality. He simply did one thing, and did it with all his strength—the purification of the religion of England as he conceived it, the abolition of "superstition and idolatry," the destruction of the power of the bishops and High-Church party.

To Cromwell this question seemed then as clear as daylight. He belonged to the class which had suffered

most from the tyranny of Laud, and had the least interest in the maintenance of any established form of worship. Grievously had Laud pressed upon the Puritans. He had interfered with all independence of thought, and forcibly insisted upon ritual and observances which numbers of earnest Christians abhorred; now the victims had turned to bay. Cromwell was simply a forceful representative of this class. Where he differed from the men he fought for was in the superior strength of his will, his genius for seeing the right course to be taken in a crisis, and, most of all, his power of learning lessons from experience and his broad tolerance of mind. It is no part of our business to follow the struggles between Charles and his people, a struggle which was gradually to drift into strife between all who believed in preserving the present constitution of Church and State after the introduction of certain reforms, and the men who saw no finality in anything less than a complete upheaval of old traditions and the destruction of Episcopacy "with all its roots and branches."

It is often supposed that the Civil War was brought about by the uprising of the people against Charles' abuse of his constitutional power. This is a mistake. As Dr. Gardiner points out with unanswerable clearness and force,[1] there could not have been a war upon this question, because Charles would have been confronted by a united nation, and must have yielded to all its demands or abdicated without a blow. Lords and Commons, Churchmen and Nonconformists, Cavaliers and Puritans, were equally determined that forced loans, benevolences, and illegal taxes of every description must be abolished, and the expenditure of the nation be placed under the

[1] History of Civil War, vol. i. 12.

control of Parliament. Not against abuse of civil power, flagrant as that was, did Puritan England draw the sword at last, but in defence of its religious convictions.

"In the mass of Englishmen," writes Dr. Gardiner, "religious belief was their only intellectual food, and religious books were their only literature."

The Bible, lately translated into English, was read with vivid eagerness and passion, and the claims of the clergy to Divine "authority" were indignantly denied. On the other hand, the Episcopalians, even those of moderate views, however ready they might be to deprecate the extreme measures taken by the prelates to force wandering sheep into the fold, were scandalised by this rude demand for liberty of conscience, especially as it came most forcibly from men of the middle classes and even humbler social ranks. In consequence of this the aristocracy also, taking alarm at these signs of independent thought and judgment on the part of their inferiors in station, slowly but surely began to rally round the king.

In such a struggle Cromwell was sure to take a vigorous part. His nature was essentially democratic, and he saw no danger in the people controlling their own destinies. With his eyes steadily fixed on the ecclesiastical tyranny of the past, and his whole soul bent upon the free tolerance of all religions, he went on unhesitatingly to tear down the fabric of Church establishment. The months went on—months of intense strain and anxiety—and for the time there was outward union between all Parliamentarians, by which Strafford was brought to the block and the king forced to concession after concession, and finally in January 1642 to leave Whitehall for Hampton Court, and Hampton Court for

Yorkshire, followed only by his household and "a few hundred gentlemen."

Yet the chasm between episcopalianism and dissent, between aristocracy and democracy, had really widened every day, until war was inevitable. If Charles had understood the signs of the times, or if he had not married a Roman Catholic wife, he might have saved his crown and averted civil war even so late as the spring of 1642. A steady adherence to moderate Episcopacy, abstention from intrigue with the Irish Catholics, faith in his people, and, above all, straight dealing with them, would have won to his side every man in England who loved order and a peaceful life better than reform of law and religion. But it was not to be. Weak when he should have been strong, arrogant when he should have bowed to the inevitable, false in his dealings with every one in turn, Charles failed as he deserved to fail. Calling himself the head of the English Church, he was found to be intriguing deeply with the Irish Catholics; asking for the confidence of the Commons and expressing himself ready to concede to them the temporary control of the militia, he was at the same time appealing to the Prince of Orange to send an army across the Channel to crush these "traitors"; he was writing to the Scots, to the "loyal gentlemen" of Yorkshire, to every one he could think of with the same purpose, thereby proving to the most loyal of his subjects that the crown and his own personal interest was more precious in his sight than the welfare of his country, and more sacred to him than his plighted word.

By April 1642 the breach between Charles and his people reached a climax, and with the summons of Hull by the king and the refusal of Sir John Hotham, the

governor, to yield the town without the consent of Parliament, war was virtually declared.

The time had now come for all Puritan men to gird up their loins and take measures to defend themselves and the cause they had at heart in a manner more forcible than words. The future must have seemed very dark to such men as Cromwell and Hampden, but their present duty was clear enough. With sorrow, but with sternest resolution, they took up the gauntlet Charles threw down. Ruin stared them in the face, but they would accept that, and death itself, rather than yield.

CHAPTER III

One of the first to leave London to enter upon practical preparations for an appeal to arms was "Oliver Cromwell, member for Cambridge, Esquire." It is at this point that we begin to find in the newspaper records of the time, Commons Journals and the like, brief allusions to Cromwell's movements. He had already emerged from obscurity. In April 1642 Cromwell is put down as a subscriber of £500[1]—more than a fourth of his income—to a relief fund for "afflicted Irish Protestants." On July 15 he "moved that we might make an order to allow the Townsmen of Cambridge to raise two Companies of Volunteers, and to appoint Captains over them."[2] The same day in the Commons Journal is this entry: "Whereas Mr. Cromwell hath sent down arms into the county of Cambridge for the defence of that county, it is this day ordered that[3] £100 he has spent for that purpose shall (some day) be repaid to him." A resolution probably valued by Cromwell rather as giving him the authority of Parliament for his act, than as any guarantee that he would receive his money back, which indeed, as far as we know, he never did. Before this time he was in his native county enrolling his first troop, teaching himself and his men the rudiments of drill and military knowledge. It must have been slow and tedious work, requiring a vast amount of patience,

[1] Rushworth, lv. 564. [2] D'Ewes MSS., f. 658–661.
[3] Commons Journal, ii. 674.

diligence, and perseverance on both sides. They were not heroic figures, these troopers. Uniform they had none, and their armour consisted merely of breastplate, "back," and "pot," or helmet, and was without ornament of any kind.[1] Their arms were a long sword, heavy and straight, and a pair of pistols. What torture such accoutrements must have been to the uninitiated on those hot days of June and July, as slowly and laboriously, by constant practice, they learnt the use of their weapons and the management of their horses—as untrained and raw as themselves! But they were in earnest, and possessed in Cromwell a leader whose energy was unflagging, and who knew by instinct the right way to deal with such men, and how to impart to them his own indomitable spirit and will. Cromwell, however, was not the man to occupy himself very long in simple preparation. Cambridge University was seething with loyalty, and early in the summer began to collect arms and treasures for the king, while along the great north road passed messengers from London to Yorkshire with important tidings. In the Commons Journal, dated August 15, there is this entry:—

"Mr. Cromwell in Cambridgeshire has seized the magazine in the Castle at Cambridge, and hath hindered the carrying of plate from the University; which, as some report, was to the value of £20,000 or thereabouts."

Other reports, from Royalist sources, say £10,000, or even £7000. But the amount is of little moment. The importance of the circumstance lies in the fact that this was one of the first aggressive acts of the Parliamentarians

[1] It has been stated that the "Ironsides" were cuirassiers, *i.e.* men in complete suits of armour. This is not true. They were equipped as above, and called "arquebusiers."

in the war. Though in all the Eastern, and many of the Southern, counties men were arming and drilling their tenants and dependents, none but Cromwell dared to strike.

The seizure of ammunition and plate, and a sharp investigation of any person passing along the road to Yorkshire, are the principal facts that have reached us concerning Cromwell's doings up to the time of Edgehill. But we may easily picture the life he lived that summer. The family at Ely could have seen little of him. All day, and half the night, he was holding counsel with friends and fellow-townsmen and constituents in Cambridge, urging them to arm, to subscribe money for arms, to organise and to combine—a man whom others consulted; whose doors were never closed against any of the "well-affected" needing counsel or aid; who, having taken the initiative while others were hesitating on the brink, became at once an acknowledged leader.[1] His sword was the first to leave the scabbard, and the last to return.

On August 22 the Royal Standard was raised at Nottingham, and war upon the Parliament was formally declared. The news, as it spread rapidly throughout the length and breadth of the land, came upon most people with a shock like the explosion of a powder-magazine. England was not prepared for war, the country, as a whole, never realising until this day that war was really in the wind. In the South the men confidently believed that Charles would yield to the Parliament; in the North it was taken for granted that the Commons would obey the king.

But now there was no room for doubt. The Royal Proclamation was read everywhere, setting forth that any

[1] Autobiography of Sir John Bramston, Knt. (Camden Society, 1845), p. 86.

man who took arms, or armed others, against his Sacred Majesty, was a traitor and a rebel, his life and estates forfeit to the crown.

Parliament replied by naming Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, their "Lord General," and placing under his command the train-bands of London and all troops and regiments which members of Parliament and others had been forming for such purpose these three months past. It was a fiction, however, dear to men's hearts, and very necessary when all legality rested in the king's name, that it should be clearly understood that the mission of this Parliament army was not to fight the king—by no means—but simply to rescue him from wicked advisers, who, as Carlyle pithily puts it, were said to "have misled him, and clouded his fine understanding, and rendered him, as it were, a beloved parent fallen *insane*." Therefore Essex was entitled "Lord General for King *and* Parliament," and received most exact instructions to protect his Majesty, after slaying his Majesty's enemies, and to bring him back in safety and honour to his faithful Commons at Westminster.

Cromwell's troop, mustered August 29, joined the army the following month, and under Colonel Stapleton drew first blood at Edgehill. The accounts of Cromwell's connection with Edgehill are various and contradictory, and range from a Royalist anecdote that he climbed to the tower of a neighbouring church to watch the progress of the battle, and, seeing it going against the Parliament, descended quickly by the bell-rope and ran away; to the note by Nathaniel Fiennes, that he was one of those who "never stirred from their troops, but . . . fought bravely till the last minute of the fight."

It is enough to say that we know he was there, and

that he did not run away. Edgehill was one of those indecisive battles in which each side claimed advantage without doing anything to justify the contention. It began by an attack on the Parliament right of Royalist cavalry under Lord Wilmot, which was successful; then came the famous charge of Rupert and his cuirassiers from the opposite wing, sweeping all before it, and which might have ended the battle had the prince held his men in hand and taken the Parliament centre in flank and rear. But his cavalry charged recklessly on, chasing stragglers and plundering baggage-waggons, and the opportunity was lost. Meanwhile the army of the Parliament, in spite of these discouragements, gathering itself together, moved forward, and concentrating its attack upon the centre of the Royalist position—a regiment of infantry guarding the Royal Standard, and commanded by Lord Lindsey—beset it with such vigour and determination, that the gallant men, though meeting the attack with unflinching courage, were cut down to a man, and the standard taken. Victory now seemed well within Lord Essex's grasp; but as the colonels of his cavalry were reforming their regiments, fallen into some confusion in their attack on the guards, news came that Rupert was returning from Kineton. The attempt was thereupon abandoned, the troops recalled, and night coming on, both armies withdrew from the struggle. A battle deeply disappointing to all men who had believed it would end the war. But for the soldiers who took part in it there were valuable lessons to be learned, which some of them never forgot.

Years afterwards, when Cromwell was Protector, he recalled the impression made upon his mind by the heroism of Lindsey's guards, and the easy victory of Rupert's cuirassiers. How far Edgehill alone prompted

the famous words with Hampden it is impossible to say; but we may safely quote them here, as most applicable to the time and place:—

"I was a person,"[1] he says, his intention being to set forth of what manner of men the army was composed, and what he and the nation owed to them—"who from my first employment was suddenly preferred and lifted up from lesser trusts to greater: from my first being a Captain of a Troop of Horse, and did labour as well as I could to discharge my trust, and God blessed me therein as it pleased Him. And I did truly and plainly—and in a way of foolish simplicity, as it was judged by very great and wise men, and good men too—desire to make my instruments help in that work. And I will deal plainly with you. I had a very worthy Friend then; and he was a very noble person, and I know his memory is very grateful to all—Mr. John Hampden. At my first going out into this engagement, I saw our men were beaten at every hand. I did indeed; and desired him that he would make some additions to my Lord Essex's Army, of some new regiments; and I told him I would be serviceable to him in bringing such men in as I thought had a spirit that would do something in the work. 'Your troops,' said I, 'are most of them old decayed serving-men and tapsters, and such kind of fellows; and,' said I, 'their troops are gentlemen's sons, younger sons, and persons of quality: do you think that the spirit of such base and mean fellows will ever be able to encounter gentlemen that have honour and courage and resolution in them?' Truly I did represent to him in this manner conscientiously; and truly I did tell him, 'You must get men of a spirit, and take it not ill what I say—I know you will

[1] Carlyle, Part x., Speech xi. p. 249.

not,—of a spirit that is likely to go on as far as gentlemen will go, or else you will be beaten still.' I told him so; I did truly. He was a wise and worthy person, and he did think that I talked a good notion, but an impracticable one. Truly I told I could *do* something in it. I did so and truly I must say this to you—impute it to what you please—I raised such men as had the fear of God before them, as made some conscience of what they did; and from that day forward, I must say to you, they were never beaten, and wherever they were engaged against the enemy they beat continually. And truly this is matter of praise to God; and it hath some instruction in it, To own men who are religious and godly."

We have quoted the passage at length, because there is a significance in it, when closely read, far beyond the one usually accepted—that Cromwell chose "men of religion" for his regiment, and drilled them well. He did this; but neither in the choice he made, nor in the discipline he insisted upon, is the greatness of his troop, his regiment, and, at last, of his army as a whole, directly due. It was the inspiration of his particular personality, and his attitude toward all who fought under his command. Alone among men of good birth and position of his time, he cared nothing for the station of a man as compared to his character. All who would serve the cause heartily and honestly, whatever religion they might profess, were treated by Cromwell absolutely alike. He went even further. Let a man in the ranks show capacity, and he was promoted, not only to be corporal or quartermaster, but to be a commissioned officer.

"I beseech you be careful," he writes to the Commissioner of Suffolk in September 1643,[1] "what Captains

[1] Carlyle, Part ii., Letter xvii. p. 134.

of Horse you choose, what men be mounted; a few honest men are better than numbers. If you choose godly, honest men to be Captains of Horse, honest men will follow them; and they will be careful to mount such." Then, driving home the moral of his sermon: "The King is exceeding strong in the West. If you be able to foil a force at the first coming of it, you will have reputation; and that is of great advantage in our affairs. God hath given it to our handful" (his own regiment); "let us endeavour to keep it. I had rather have a plain, russet-coated Captain that knows what he fights for, and loves what he knows, than that which you call a 'Gentleman' and is nothing else. I honour a *Gentleman* that is so indeed!"

And all this came not from policy, or from any miraculous intuition of what was to prove the salvation of the Puritan cause, but simply from the character of the man. Where we are always wronging Cromwell, now accusing him of depths of infamy which he did not deserve, now crediting him with superhuman sagacity which he never possessed, is in failing to perceive that his character, in spite of many twists and turns, was, on the whole, a remarkably simple one, and that the main factor of his rise to power lay in the circumstance that the qualities he possessed, both for good and for evil, were naturally fitted, as it would seem, to meet and conquer the difficulties and dangers of the time. It was natural to Cromwell, for instance, to love an honest man and hate a false and useless one; to be supremely indifferent to all outward forms and ceremonies; to work with all his might, and, by his example, to encourage all under him to do the same; to listen, like Abraham Lincoln, with untiring patience to the

opinions of other men, but to reserve his own until he had very fully made up his mind, and then to be immovable. Fear was unknown to him. He had no avarice, no greed for power or personal glorification. The name and position he made in the world came by gradual degrees. When the necessity arose for a certain thing to be done, and no other man was to be found to do it, then, and not before, Cromwell stepped into the breach. And as it was a time in which many things had to be done which few men cared to do, Cromwell's hands were always full, and he rose quickly to power. That he possessed extraordinary powers of mind and brain no one has ever denied; but comparatively few of his biographers, we venture to think, have done justice to the straightforward simplicity with which he invariably acted where any question personal to himself was involved. He rarely troubled himself to answer criticisms, and never much resented them; but, taking his own straight course toward the goal he had in view, he let dogs bark and wolves howl as they might. Secure in his own honesty of purpose, he met all dangers and disasters with the faith that whatever God willed was right, and would work out for good to the world.

CHAPTER IV

The battle of Edgehill was fought on the 23rd of October.

The following day Charles took Banbury—the siege of which he had raised to meet Essex before Kineton—and went into winter quarters at Oxford. Essex, finding that no designs were likely to be entertained against London, dismissed the greater portion of his army to their homes, Cromwell's troops among them.

The country now settled down to await the events of the spring. In some counties life went on pretty much as usual; in others men fell into a feverish panic, and prayed for peace at any price; but in most places preparations, more or less systematic, for the struggle which all foresaw would be long and bitter, were in progress, and leading county men formed themselves into committees of defence to raise troops and the money to pay and arm them. In the Eastern Counties the idea, though not originating there, was taken up and carried into practice more thoroughly than in any other part of England. Cromwell threw himself into the work heart and soul. He saw that in the solidarity and completeness of such an organisation lay the one safeguard against plunder and ravage by the Royalist soldiers, who had already given the people of the Midlands a taste of their rapacity and violence. He saw, further, that one county alone could do little. There must be a combination of several, bound closely together in mutual

support. The difficulty of such an undertaking was enormous. Local jealousies and prejudice of all kinds stood in the way; want of initiation in one place, over-excitability in another; the timidity of men who had money to lose, the ignorance of those who had none—all had to be reckoned with and overcome before any result worthy of the name could be expected. Besides this, small Royalist plots were always cropping up; Cambridge University was a smouldering mass of Royalism; and innumerable private houses had to be searched for arms and plate and money, which, if left alone, would all find its way to the king. Many men besides Cromwell were employed in such work. Committees throughout the five counties of Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex were busy as bees; but it was Cromwell's energy, inexhaustible patience, and vigilance which brought the work to a successful issue; it succeeded nowhere else. He seems to have been literally ubiquitous these winter months. Wherever there was a hitch or a danger in the Eastern Counties, whether it were a slack committee or a threatened rising of malignants, Cromwell was at the place immediately, and the difficulty disappeared.

For Cromwell himself no finer training or experience for the part he was to play in the future could have been found. His judgment and tact in dealing with men were tested daily. He learned how to work through others, how to economise time and labour, and how to secure obedience by moral suasion and quiet argument rather than by force. Also, he learnt to *know himself.* He was unconsciously measuring himself with others, as men of action and affairs must constantly do; and an unswerving confidence in his own power of carrying

through anything that he undertook, or advised to be undertaken, became a recognisable characteristic in him about this time, and grew in intensity and force as his responsibilities increased, and his position in the army rose in importance.

The problem of the defence of the Associated Counties did not cease when they had been brought into line and raised their quota of armed men. It was a great feat to have accomplished so much; but the work of keeping up the army when formed, and of disciplining and training the men, was harder still. Most of them were volunteers who had provided their own horses, often their own weapons and armour; all of them had made great sacrifices for the cause. Then trade was beginning to suffer; the poor had difficulty in living at all, the rich buttoned up their pockets. Yet money was needed more than men, and Cromwell and his Committee were determined to get it. On the other hand, while Cromwell insisted upon contributions being punctually paid, mercilessly dunning those who held aloof, he took the greatest care that they should not have cause to complain of the troops they had helped to raise. The discipline he maintained was really wonderful. Not an instance of plunder or bad conduct of any kind was ever reported to him but it received swift punishment. He was continually urging upon his officers the urgent necessity of keeping the men within bounds. Yet there is no record that in his own regiment he was ever troubled with deserters, while there is the plainest evidence that later, when disaffection and mutiny were rife in the army, his men remained faithful. The only occasion in which they ever refused to obey a commander was, when they were sent to fight under Sir William Waller in 1647.

The matter was reported to Parliament, who despatched Cromwell to bring them to reason. No particulars of the event have come down to us but the significant fact that Cromwell succeeded in doing this in three days!

The secret of Cromwell's power lay in his accessibility to his men. He gave himself no airs of authority. Though he expected instant obedience to orders, yet, whenever it was possible to relax discipline in camp or on march, he treated his men as friends and comrades. He fared as they did, eating the same coarse food, sharing the same hardships. He was just and impartial in his discipline. No officer escaped punishment because of his rank; no trooper, however humble, was punished without clear evidence being adduced of his guilt. It is well to lay stress on this fact. In after days, when the Levellers were rampant, and the whole of the army was infected with a dangerous spirit of unrest, which in the case of two regiments flamed into open mutiny, Cromwell alone was able to quell the storm, and the main reason for this was the belief of the soldiers that he was a just man.

In these first two years of the war—the hardest years, physically, of Cromwell's life—was laid the foundation of all his future power and influence. Not consciously. There is not a shred of evidence that at this time he ever aspired to greatness of station, or craved for it; but he did his duty as he saw it with a strength that was greater than the strength of other men.

In January 1643 he received a colonel's commission, and took command of a regiment of East Anglian Volunteers, comprised of fourteen full troops[1]—1120 men. The campaign for the spring was now in sight, and

[1] A troop at this time in Cromwell's regiment numbered eighty men.

toward the end of February it seemed as if the resources of the Eastern County Association Committees would be severely tried. Evil reports reached them that Rupert was ravaging Gloucestershire, Wilts, and Hampshire; and toward the end of February one Lord Capel, with twenty thousand men, was reputed to be making ready for a raid upon Cambridgeshire. The alarm was given, and swift notice sent to every town, village, and hamlet to send its quota of men. Within a few days, so prompt was the response, so excellent the organisation of the counties, twelve thousand men had assembled at Cambridge to repel the foe. Lord Grey of Wark commanded the army, with Colonel Cromwell as his right hand. But there was no fighting. Lord Capel's army was not of a kind to face such a force with impunity; and after a short interval the greater part of the levies returned to their homes, with an order to hold themselves ready to turn out at a day's notice at any time if wanted. Cromwell's regiment, however, and one or two others remained intact, and set about fortifying Cambridge. The cost of this work was £2000,[1] for which sum appeals were sent to all parts, and contributions exacted from the colleges. The appeal, from which we ascertain the amount spent, only brought in the sum of £1, 19s. 2d., by which it may be seen how hard it was to collect money.

We next hear of Cromwell seizing the High Sheriff of Hertfordshire, who had called upon the people to arm for the king, in a market-place in St. Albans. This gentleman, after vigorous resistance from the populace, was made prisoner by Cromwell's troopers and conveyed to London. A few days later (March 1643) Cromwell was in Norfolk, with more serious business on hand.

[1] "Letter to Inhabitants of Fen Drayton," Carlyle, Part ii. p. 105.

Not only had suspicious arms and accoutrements been found in Norwich, but rumours had reached the Committee for the Counties that foreign money had been exchanged in the town, and that the little seaport, Lowestoft, was fortifying itself against the Association. What this might mean men shuddered to think. Visions of an immediate invasion from Holland, of an army collected by the queen, haunted the East Anglian mind. Cromwell was wanted at once! He was, as usual, ready to strike.

"And the next morning between five and six," the account runs,[1] "the Colonel with his five troops (300 to 400 men) with Captain Fountain's, Captain Rich's, and eighty of our Norwich volunteers, he marched towards Lowestoft, where he was to meet with the Yarmouth volunteers, who brought four or five pieces of ordnance. The town (Lowestoft) had blocked themselves up; all except where they had placed their ordnance, which were three pieces, before which a chain was drawn to keep off the horse. The Colonel summoned the town, and demanded, If they would deliver up their strangers, the Town, and their army, promising them favour if so; if not, none. They yielded to deliver up their strangers, but not to the rest. Whereupon our Norwich dragoons crept under the chains before mentioned, and came within pistol-shot of their ordnance; proffering to fire upon their cannoneer, who fled; so they gained the two pieces of ordnance, and broke the chain; and they and the horse entered the Town without more resistance. . . ."

A quaint, and probably truthful, account of an incident typical of many in Cromwell's experience—

[1] Letter of John Cory, Carlyle, Part ii. p. 108.

small engagements in themselves as they stood, but likely to have grown into something much larger had they not been dealt with so promptly, decisively, and in so temperate a spirit. In this case, as in all the rest, the delinquents were simply fined according to their means, and released upon guarantee of good behaviour.

At the same time, we do not hear that Cromwell was a popular man in any sense of the word, though undoubtedly respected. Assertions are sometimes made that he gained his commanding position in the fens before the war began, by pandering to the violence and agitation of the mob. No satisfactory evidence is forthcoming in support of this contention. The best refutation to it lies in the fact that from the day he held the reins of authority he sacrificed all claims upon the affections of the multitude by his high conception of public duty. No man who suppressed lawlessness among his neighbours with such determination as Cromwell, and expected so high a standard of patriotism from the inhabitants whose safety he guarded, could have aided or abetted an unscrupulous campaign against property. The confusion of ideas on this subject arises from Cromwell's sympathy for all poor and oppressed persons, which was as much a part of his nature as his respect for orderliness and self-restraint. In his younger days he took vigorous part in an agitation against the alteration of the government of Huntingdon. This town had hitherto been governed by a common council, elected annually by the burgesses; but in 1630, through Court influence, it was changed to a little oligarchical clique of twelve aldermen appointed for life. Again, in 1638, he made himself unpleasantly

notorious among his aristocratic neighbours and connections by taking up with great force and energy the grievances of the fen-men, who were in danger of being ousted from small freeholds by which they made their living, through a seizure of 152,000 acres of land by the king, who, for this consideration, had promised to complete a scheme for the drainage of the fens. As a result of Cromwell's action, and the strength of his case, the design fell through. Lastly, in 1641, when he was a member of the Long Parliament, he ventured to oppose the most influential man in his county, the Earl of Manchester, in a manner that must have seriously ruffled that mild-tempered nobleman, and which cut off the best chance Cromwell could ever hope for of aid in high quarters for the advancement of his interests in Parliament.

Cromwell's attitude in the matter was so characteristic that it is worth while to give the incident here.

The queen held certain manor rights near St. Ives, which she sold to the Earl of Manchester, and on one of them, the Soke of Somersham, an enclosure of land took place which caused serious hardship to a large number of peasants whose living depended upon raising stock on the common and fowling in the marshes. It was the familiar question of "Commons' rights." A petition, upon which Cromwell was probably consulted, was sent to the Commons, who had already appointed a committee to consider a bill for the conveyance of similar grants of land made by the king to the queen, of which committee Cromwell was a member. While the Commons were still considering the whole question the Lords took action on their own account, and gave Manchester possession of the Soke of Somersham.

Thereupon the fen-men, conceiving their cause to be hopeless, and probably starving, rioted and broke up the fences. Their leaders were brought before the Committee to answer for the offence, upon which Cromwell came forward as their champion, and, Clarendon tells us, and probably with truth—though whatever Clarendon says has to be taken with many grains of salt—was not sparing of his language to their Lordships. The end of the business is obscure; but the flashlight we receive of Cromwell, roused into one of his rare bursts of anger, is very welcome. His power with the people lay here in his persistent hatred of injustice and oppression—a very doubtful virtue to the cut-and-dried "obedience-to-authority" type of mind then and now, but not to be confounded for a moment with the professional agitator, demagogic platform-speaker, whose character is made up of froth and falsehood, and little else.

If Cromwell, throughout the earlier part of his public life, set himself to acquire popularity, as some of his critics assume from the foregoing incidents, he must have had a very strange notion of the best way to attain it. Not only had he no mercy in fining "malignants" in the Eastern Counties where it was a question of raising money, but he never ceased in his calls upon the "well-affected," nor was he always polite. A man who was unwilling to give time and money for the sake of the cause and the country had a bad time of it if Cromwell were acquainted with him. He worked incessantly himself. Every penny he could spare was spent freely. Those who grudged money he thought to be traitors to the cause. Concerning the Cavaliers, his creed was simple and not unreasonable. They and their friends, he said, were

aiding and abetting the king's evil counsellors to re-establish religious tyranny and oppress the people, therefore they must pay for it. If they kept still they were unmolested; but at the least action taken against Parliament down came his hand heavily upon them, and fines were rigidly exacted.

It was hard and extremely unpleasant work, for Cromwell spared no one. Neither family ties and connections nor old friendships made the least difference to him. The cause came first in his mind, and was faithfully served.

In this wise passed the winter months of 1642–3, until in the North and West events began to develop, which rendered necessary the services of Cromwell and his regiment, and any other levies he could muster, beyond the borders of the five counties. The spring of 1643 was a gloomy time for the Puritans. Rupert was raiding in the Home Counties; Sir Ralf Hopton pressing Lord Stamford hard in the West; the Marquis of Newcastle driving the Fairfaxes slowly but surely before him in the North. The balance of power, however, might have been turned against the king but for the supineness or over-caution of the Parliament's Commander-in-Chief, the Earl of Essex, who lay at Windsor with a large and well-appointed army—doing nothing. In vain Members of Parliament, led by John Hampden, pressed the Earl to advance rapidly against Rupert and crush him and his cavalry raids. He would not listen to such counsel, but stubbornly remained on the defensive at Windsor, guarding London like some great watch-dog growling before his kennel while burglars were ransacking the house. He was no coward; but it is supposed that he believed that certain negotiations for peace with Charles which were

languidly proceeding at Oxford might be endangered by any aggressive action on his part.

Whatever may have been Essex's private reasons for the course he pursued, the consequences were disastrous. Everywhere, except in the Eastern Counties, the Royalists took heart and courage, and began to plume themselves upon being the masters of the situation. Everywhere, but within that strong ring fence of organised concentrated personal force, the Parliamentarians were losing faith and hope. And when the summer came, events following in quick succession brought affairs to a crisis, sweeping Cromwell outside the field of action he had hitherto occupied, and bringing him face to face with the full dangers of the situation, and at the same time bringing the exultant Cavaliers of Newark-on-Trent, of Stamford in Lincolnshire, and finally, of Newcastle's fine army, face to face with him.

CHAPTER V

THE danger to the Parliament cause in the spring of 1643 was spreading like a prairie fire, which not having been stamped out when it was of small dimensions had now grown beyond bounds. It was in the North that it burned most fiercely, and northward into Lincolnshire Cromwell was now despatched.

He had under his command his own regiment of arquebusiers (see p. 26), some pieces of ordnance, and such other troops, mostly infantry from the Lincolnshire levies or elsewhere, as he could pick up at need. His force numbered from one thousand to fifteen hundred men.

In theory, these regiments were under the command of Lord Grey of Wark, commander of the Eastern Association army. In practice, Cromwell managed his own affairs; and though he loyally endeavoured to co-operate with his superior officer where opportunity offered, and was always urging concentration of forces, they never effected anything together. All the headway made in those parts against the Cavaliers was accomplished by Cromwell's independent action.

The task Cromwell set before himself, namely—to free Lincolnshire of Royalists and unite it with the Eastern Counties, was to prove for many months an impossible one; but in the way he attempted it, in the experience he gained, and the reputation he made as a cavalry commander, is to be found the key of the ultimate success of the Puritan cause.

The position in those parts at the end of April 1643 was sufficiently alarming. The Marquis of Newcastle, a clever soldier, though personally indolent, had outmanœuvred the Fairfaxes, who commanded the Parliament army in Yorkshire, had advanced large forces into Lincolnshire, and strongly garrisoned Newark, from which centre marauding parties of Cavaliers went forth harrying the country far and wide, until only a few fortified towns were held by the Parliament throughout Lincolnshire. To add to the dismay of the Puritans, the queen, with ammunition purchased by the pawning of the crown jewels in Holland, had landed in the North, was persuading wavering adherents to the Parliament to declare for the king, and awakening enthusiasm among all the Catholic gentry. The whole country-side, in fact, was blazing with Royalism, and Newcastle apparently was only waiting for some definite move on the part of the king, and a decisive victory over the Fairfaxes, to march through the Eastern Counties to London.

The problem to be solved, as the Eastern Counties Association saw when they sent Cromwell with his handful of men to strengthen the scattered regiments and garrison of disheartened Lincolnshire, was how to stay Newcastle's advance, or at least to make some vigorous diversion to relieve the pressure upon Lord Fairfax. Cromwell saw at a glance that the only effective way of doing it was to take Newark at any cost and risk. While Newark was allowed to stand with a garrison of more than a thousand men and ample stores of food and ammunition, a menace to all peaceable inhabitants for thirty miles round, there was no chance of establishing any line of defence in Lincolnshire against the advance of Newcastle into the Eastern Counties. The

other towns might be taken and re-taken, but none were of such importance as Newark, for not one offered so good a base for supplies, or so secure a stronghold for a large body of troops.

Cromwell's desires in this matter and the difficulties which prevented their fulfilment are clearly indicated in a letter of his to "The Honourable the Committee at Lincoln," dated May 3, 1643. This Committee, it may be mentioned, was formed on the same lines as the Committee of the Eastern Counties, but through lack of organisation—and Newark—it was unable to keep the county free from the enemy, though it did some work in raising troops, of which Cromwell in his campaigns there made good use.

[1] "My Lords and Gentlemen,—I must needs be hardly thought on; because I am still the messenger of unhappy tidings and delays concerning you—though I know my heart is to assist you with all expedition!

"My Lord Grey hath now again failed me of the rendezvous at Stamford—nothwithstanding that both he and I received Letters from his Excellency" (Lord Essex) "commanding us both to meet, and, together with Sir John Gell and the Nottingham forces, to join with you. My Lord Grey sent Sir Edward Hartop to me, To let me know he could not meet me at Stamford according to our agreement; fearing the exposing of Leicester to the forces of Mr. Hastings and some other Troops drawing that way.

"Believe it, it were better, in my poor opinion, Leicester were not, than that there should not be found an immediate taking of the field by our forces to accomplish the common ends. Wherein I shall deal as freely with him,

[1] Carlyle, Letter ix. Part ii. p. 117.

when I meet him, as you can desire. I perceive Ashby-de-la-Zouch sticks much with him. I have offered him now another place of meeting; to come to which I suppose he will not deny me; and that to be to-morrow. If you shall therefore think fit to send one over unto us to be with us at night—you do not know how far we may prevail with him; To draw speedily to a head, With Sir John Gell and the other forces, where we may all meet at a general rendezvous, to the end you know of" (the siege of Newark). "And then you shall receive full satisfaction concerning my integrity;—and if no man shall help you, yet will not I be wanting to do my duty, God assisting me.

"If we could unite these forces, and with them speedily make Grantham the general rendezvous, both of yours and ours, I think it would do well. I shall bend my endeavours that way. Your concurrence by some able instrument to solicit this, might probably exceedingly hasten it; especially having so good a foundation to work upon as my Lord General's commands. Our Norfolk forces, which will not prove so many as you may imagine by six or seven hundred men, will lie conveniently at Spalding; and, I am confident, be ready to meet at Grantham at the general rendezvous.

"I have no more to trouble you; but begging of God to take away the impediments that hinder our conjunction, and to prosper our designs, take leave,

"Your faithful servant,

"Oliver Cromwell."

These early days of May were a discouraging and bitter time for Cromwell. Again and again did he try to induce the other commanders of the Parliamentary

forces in Lincolnshire to make a united effort to crush their powerful enemy, but he never succeeded. The fact was, that the colonels of these regiments were too much afraid of attacks being made by Royalist marauders upon their own homes if they wandered too far away. They could not rise to the occasion or grasp the fact, so patent to Cromwell, that one determined and successful onslaught upon Newark would relieve the whole country-side of these pests. In the meantime the "Newarkers," themselves, receiving information of the vacillation and weakness of the Roundheads, came to the conclusion that a few vigorous assaults directed against the Parliament commanders in detail would clear Lincolnshire of their presence, and open a broad, easy road for Newcastle's army southward. These Royalist troopers were well-mounted and of dashing courage. No Roundheads so far, in these parts, had withstood them in open field.

On the 13th of May a large body of Newarkers sallied forth to take Grantham. They probably had little doubt of success. The troops stationed there were not so numerous as their own, the commander some man from Cambridge, of whom they had never heard.

Two miles from Grantham the Cavaliers drew rein and formed into line of battle, for in the last glow of the sunset they saw a regiment advancing to meet them.

As the dark lines of Puritan troopers drew near, the easy confidence of the Newarkers received a shock. There was a steadiness and discipline in these Roundheads; the energy, yet precision of movement, of men eager to fight, but perfectly under command. The Cavaliers had not much time, however, for observation. It was usual for them to attack, but this evening the Parliament men took the offensive. There was a volley from dragooners

(mounted infantry carrying short muskets) on either side, and then from Cromwell's lips came the order to advance to the attack. The dragooners opened their ranks and stood aside; the troopers drew their heavy swords and drove in their spurs; and upon the serried line of Cavaliers swept Cromwell's regiment in its first charge, crushing and putting all to rout in one resistless onslaught. It was a fine achievement for untried troops, for the Newarkers were twice as numerous, and were seasoned men. The care, thought, and time Cromwell and his officers had given to the drill and management of their men was well rewarded now. An account of the fight is given by Cromwell himself in one of his brief, modest letters to official superiors—letters unique among all military despatches, and bearing the indelible stamp of the writer's personality. This one, the first letter of Cromwell's ever printed in the papers of the day, is worth producing as it stands, both for its own sake and because it well represents the simplicity and straightforwardness of the character of the man who penned it.

"To ——: These—[1]

"Grantham, 13*th May* 1643.

"Sir,—God hath given us, this evening, a glorious victory over our enemies. They were, as we are informed, one-and-twenty colours of horse-troops, and three or four of dragoons.

"It was late in the evening when we drew out; they came and faced us within two miles of the town. So soon as we had the alarm, we drew out our forces, consisting of about twelve troops,—whereof some of them so poor and broken" (with hard riding in bad weather,

[1] Carlyle, Letter x. Part ii. p. 118.

over terrible country) "that you shall seldom see worse: with this handful it pleased God to cast the scale. For after we had stood a little, above musket-shot the one body from the other; and the dragooners had fired on both sides, for the space of half-an-hour or more; they not advancing towards us, we agreed to charge them. And, advancing the body after many shots on both sides, we came on with our troops at a pretty round trot: they standing firm to receive us; and our men charging fiercely upon them, by God's providence they were immediately routed, and ran all away, and we had the execution of them two or three miles.

"I believe some of our soldiers did kill two or three men apiece in the pursuit; but what the number of dead is we are not certain. We took forty-five Prisoners, besides drivers of their horse and arms, and rescued many Prisoners whom they had lately taken of ours; and we took four or five of their colours.

"OLIVER CROMWELL."

It was a complete victory, and a very important one. Never again could the "Newarkers" range the country with impunity, seeking what they might devour. This engagement, and numberless small skirmishes of which only faint indications remain, prove Cromwell's success in defeating and foiling raids to have been so great that the Cavaliers began to feel the same uneasiness and discomfort from which their adversaries had suffered before Cromwell's arrival. To Cromwell himself, however, this work was in the last degree unsatisfactory. He did it because there was nothing else to be done—and he did it well. But he was continually making fruitless efforts to persuade others to join him in burning out the nest from

which came the wasps that he crushed in detail. In addition to the disappointment of failing to secure any combination of forces, Cromwell became severely straitened for money and supplies. This difficulty increased as time went on, until matters were very nearly desperate. Indeed, at this time, feeling his want of influence and the backwardness of his friends, the utter inadequacy of his own resources, and the black outlook for the Parliament cause in all parts of England, Cromwell would have despaired of the cause but for the faith that was in him that God's hand was on his side.

A vivid glimpse of Cromwell's state of mind at this time, and the manner in which he addressed the men he considered most responsible for his misfortunes, is given in a letter addressed to the Committee of the Associated Counties at Colchester, and with this we may close our account of his work before Newark.

"To the Mayor, etc., of Colchester, These:—

"LINCOLNSHIRE, 28*th May* 1643.

"GENTLEMEN,—I thought it my duty once more to write unto you For more strength to be speedily sent unto us, for this great Service.

"I suppose you hear of the great Defeat given by my Lord Fairfax to the Newcastle Force at Wakefield" (a check, very timely and well delivered, but which did not last long). "It was a great mercy of God to us. And had it not been bestowed upon us at this very present, my Lord Fairfax had not known how to have subsisted. We assure you, should the Force we have miscarry,—expect nothing but a speedy march of the Enemy up unto you.

"Why should you not strengthen us to make us

subsist,—judge you the danger of the neglect; and how inconvenient this improvidence, or unthrift, may be to you! I shall never write but according to my judgment: I tell you again, It concerns you exceedingly to be persuaded by me. My Lord Newcastle is near Six-thousand foot, and above Sixty troops of Horse; my Lord Fairfax is about Three-thousand foot and Nine troops of horse; and we have about Twenty-four troops of horse and dragooneers. The Enemy draws more to the Lord Fairfax: our motions and yours must be exceeding speedy, or else it will do you no good at all.

"If you send, let your men come to Boston. I beseech you hasten the supply to us:—forget not money! I press not hard; though I do so need that, I assure you, the foot and the dragooneers are ready to mutiny. Lay not too much upon the back of a poor gentleman, who desires without much noise, to lay down his life, and bleed the last drop to serve the Cause and you. I ask not your money for myself: if that were my end and hope,—viz., the pay of my place,—I would not open my mouth at this time. I desire to deny myself; but others will not be satisfied. I beseech you hasten supplies. Forget not your prayers.

"Gentlemen, I am yours,

"OLIVER CROMWELL."[1]

[1] Carlyle, Letter xi. Part ii. p. 121.

CHAPTER VI

CROMWELL'S appeals were not without effect. Supplies and money came by degrees, but the promises were always considerably in excess of the performance. The very security enjoyed by the Eastern Counties from pillage and forced contributions made the task of the Committees more difficult. Men feared the pinch of poverty in the future, and failed to realise that, hard as this would be, the depredations of hungry Cavaliers at the present time would be far worse. In considering the position of the leaders in the earlier years of the Civil War, it must be remembered that the main expenses of the armies on either side were borne by voluntary contributions. On the Royalist side the heaviest burden lay upon a few noblemen, who helped their royal master with lavish generosity. On that of the Parliament the sums contributed by individuals were much smaller, and appeals had to be made on a much wider scale. Moreover, while it was the rule—often an absolute necessity from want of means—for the Royalist armies to obtain a great part of their supplies by plunder, the Parliament generals, from the first, attempted to pay their way. In Cromwell's case the effort actually succeeded, and the soldiers were no burden at all to the country at large, except, it is said, by occasionally making a somewhat free use of other people's horses. The strain of providing sufficient means to keep his troops together was the heaviest burden, among many, that Cromwell

had to bear at this time. Money which his energy and persuasiveness had induced men to give when he was at home ceased to flow in now that he was at the front. The only resources that remained to him were letters of protest, warning, and appeal. For posterity this was a fortunate circumstance. Many of the letters that have been preserved enable us to feel the pulse of all that stirring time in a way that would have been impossible otherwise. They are exciting reading if we realise the circumstances under which they were written, and the feelings, hopes, and fears of the writer. His men were nearly starving, and steadily dwindling in numbers; the recruits which came in were nothing like as good as the men they replaced. He had daily to circumvent a wary, active, unscrupulous enemy; and, finally, every week that went by brought tidings of disaster and defeat elsewhere. In June, Sir William Waller was annihilated in the West; Bristol, the great stronghold of those parts, taken by Rupert; and in the North, the Fairfaxes were beaten by Newcastle at Atherton Moor, and driven into Hull. But worse than all these misfortunes, at least to Cromwell, was the news that Hampden had been killed in a skirmish at Chalgrove. With Hampden passed away the one resolute spirit among the leading Parliament men of the South. Hampden, like Cromwell, had felt from the first that the war should be sharp and short. No terms with the king should be proposed or thought of until he had been thoroughly conquered in the field. Victory first, by arms, for to arms they had appealed; then a settlement founded upon genuine reforms in religious worship, and due safeguards for good government in the future; together with a general amnesty and healing of sores. That, very

briefly, had been Hampden's, as it was Cromwell's, object in going to war. Now, in June 1643, when the Parliament stood in the sorest need of its strong, broad-minded men, Hampden died, and Cromwell was left—alone. In his heart a sense of utter isolation must have mingled with the grief of losing an old and valued friend.

In Parliament men began to talk of peace with Charles at any price; and though the majority held firm, they were like soldiers, who, though they stood steadfastly to their guns, were without any real leader. Further, as time went on all showed a fatal inclination to think of themselves, or some narrow side-interest, more than of the welfare of the nation. Courage, endurance, and sincerity these Parliament men had in full measure, but Cromwell and Hampden alone possessed the forceful energy and driving power which would bring back peace to the troubled, warring nation; combined with a breadth of view, and desire for the union of all honest men, no matter what their creed or politics, which must be the first quality of those who would create a Commonwealth.

How far Cromwell realised the full significance of Hampden's death we have no means of knowing. It was not his way to look further into the future than he could reach—a characteristic upon which his greatest biographer, Dr. Gardiner, places marked stress, laying to that score most of the mistakes Cromwell made later in life, and the lack of permanence in his constructive work. That this is true does not admit of doubt; but it is a question whether this very limitation, by enabling him to concentrate all his thoughts on the duty of to-day, did not give Cromwell his herculean strength in the

almost innumerable crises to which, both in this summer of 1643 and for ten years afterwards, the Puritan cause was liable, and which only his marvellous presence of mind enabled it to pass through in safety.

At this time, after a bitter sigh at the country's loss and his own, and a swift dark dread of the advantage the waverers and traitors at Westminster would receive in their peace-at-any-price policy, Cromwell turned calmly to his work again and did it with all his might. Newark was impregnable; Fairfax was beaten into Hull; nothing lay between Newcastle's victorious army and the Eastern Counties but such scattered forces as Cromwell himself could collect. Not only this, but in spite of all he could do the Cavaliers were gaining advantage in his immediate neighbourhood. They had taken Stamford —a town at the meeting-point of three counties, Lincoln, Rutland, and Northampton—and were pressing Lord Willoughby hard at Gainsborough, the only considerable place north of Lincoln still in the hands of the Parliament.

A crisis such as this to a man whose mind was accustomed to search the future for guidance and hope, rather than fix his mind solely upon the need of the moment, would have been dark and terrible indeed. To Cromwell it was no more than a rude stimulant. As others failed, his genius rose in proportion. At the news of Stamford's capitulation he collected every available man, marched thither, and retook it. Hearing that a thousand Cavaliers from Newark were raiding in the vicinity he met and crushed them, and chased them into Burleigh House, a fortified stronghold, which was thought by its owners to be proof against anything less than heavy artillery. Cromwell, however, summoned it promptly, and being

received with defiance, gave it so vigorous a battering that the garrison surrendered at discretion. All lives were spared, but the place was sacked. Then Cromwell turned his attention to Gainsborough. He allowed his men to rest for one night, and at the first streak of daylight marched them to Grantham, and with such expedition that they covered the distance, about twenty miles, before noon. His movements after this he describes in a letter to the Committee of the Eastern Counties Association at Cambridge. Of all Cromwell's letters this contains the clearest and most vivid narrative of events. They are described simply enough. There is no exaggeration; no attempt to colour this incident, or suppress that; quietly, modestly, but with due distinctness and emphasis, he tells the story of one of the most remarkable achievements of the Civil War. To realise how remarkable it was, it should be remembered that the siege of Burleigh House began at three o'clock on a Tuesday morning and did not end until sunset; that the march to Gainsborough, fifty-five miles, began at first streak of dawn on Wednesday, and was completed in forty-eight hours, namely, at about four o'clock on Friday morning; and that the troops there and then fought and "beat to dirt" an enemy superior in number to their own, marched into Gainsborough, and in the afternoon faced and baffled the whole of Newcastle's army; and, finally, leaving Gainsborough, retreated many miles southward before they rested for the night.

And all this was done in the dog-days of July, by men mounted upon heavy, coarsely-bred horses, weighted with armour, "back, breast, and pot," and swords which it took the full strength of arm and shoulder to wield.

Here is Cromwell's account of it:—

[1] "To my noble friends, etc. [the Committee of the Association sitting at Cambridge].

"HUNTINGDON, 31*st July* 1643.

"GENTLEMEN,—No man desires more to present you with encouragement than myself, because of the forwardness I find in you—to your honour be it spoken—to promote this great Cause. And truly God follows us with encouragements, who is the God of blessings:—and I beseech you let Him not lose his blessings upon us! They come in season and with all the advantages of heartening; as if God should say, 'Up and be doing, and I will stand by you, and help you!" There is nothing to be feared but our own sin and sloth.

"It hath pleased the Lord to give your servant and soldier a notable victory now at Gainsborough. I marched after the taking of Burleigh House upon Wednesday to Grantham, where I met about 300 horse and dragooners of Nottingham. With these, by agreement we met the Lincolners at North Scarle, which is about ten miles from Gainsborough, upon Thursday in the evening; where we tarried until two of the clock in the morning; and then with our whole body advanced towards Gainsborough.

"About a mile and a half from the Town, we met a forlorn-hope of the enemy of near 100 horse. Our dragooners laboured to beat them back; but not alighting off their horses, the enemy charged them, and beat some four or five of them off their horses; our horse charged them and made them retire unto their main body. We advanced, and came to the bottom of a steep hill; we could not well get up but by some tracks;

[1] Carlyle, Letter xii. Part ii. p. 123.

which our men essaying to do, a body of the enemy endeavoured to hinder wherein we prevailed, and got the top of the hill. This was done by the Lincolners, who had the vanguard.

"When we all recovered the top of the hill, we saw a great Body of the enemy's horse facing us, at about a musket-shot or less distance; and a good Reserve of a full regiment of horse behind it. We endeavoured to put our men into as good order as we could. The enemy in the meantime advanced towards us, to take us at disadvantage; but in such order as we were, we charged their great body, I having the right wing; we came up horse to horse; where we disputed it with our swords and pistols a pretty time; all keeping close order, so that one could not break the other. At last, they a little shrinking, our men perceiving it, pressed in upon them, and immediately routed this whole body; some flying on one side, and others on the other of the enemy's Reserve: and our men, pursuing them, had chase and execution about five or six miles.

"I perceiving this body which was the Reserve standing still unbroken, kept back my Major, Whalley, from the chase; and with my own troop and the other of my regiment, in all being three troops" (240 men), "we got into a body. In this Reserve stood General Cavendish; who one while faced me, another while faced four of the Lincoln troops, which was all of ours that stood upon the place, the rest being engaged in the chase. At last General Cavendish charged the Lincolners, and routed them. Immediately I fell on his rear with my three troops; which did so astonish him, that he gave over the chase, and would fain have delivered himself from me. But I pressing

on forced them down a hill, having good execution of them; and below the hill, drove the General with some of his soldiers into a quagmire; where my Captain-Lieutenant slew him with a thrust under his short ribs. The rest of the body was wholly routed, not one man staying upon the place.

"We then, after this defeat which was so total, relieved the Town with such powder and provision as we brought. Which done, we had notice that there were six troops of horse and 300 foot on the other side of the Town, about a mile off us: we desired some foot of my Lord Willoughby's, about 400, and, with our horse and these foot, marched towards them: when we came towards the place where their horse stood, we beat back with my troops about two or three troops of the enemy's, who retired into a small village at the bottom of the hill. When we recovered the hill, we saw in the bottom, about a quarter of a mile from us, a regiment of foot; after that another, after that the Marquis of Newcastle's own regiment; consisting in all of about 50 foot colours, and a great body of horse;—which indeed was Newcastle's Army. Which, coming so unexpectedly, put us to new consultations. My Lord Willoughby and I, being in the Town, agreed to call off our foot. I went to bring them off: but before I returned, divers of the foot were engaged; the enemy advancing with his whole body. Our foot retreated in disorder, and with some loss got the Town; where now they are. Our horse also came off with some trouble, being wearied with the long fight, and their horses tired; yet faced the enemy's fresh horse, and by several moves got off without the loss of one man; the enemy following the rear with a great body. The honour of this retreat is due to God, as

also the rest: Major Whalley did in this carry himself with all gallantry becoming a gentleman and a Christian.

"Thus you have this true relation, as short as I could. What you are to do upon it, is next to be considered. If I could speak words to pierce your hearts with the sense of our and your condition I would! If you will raise 2000 Foot at present to encounter this Army of Newcastle's, to raise the siege, and to enable us to fight him—we doubt not by the grace of God, but that we shall be able to relieve the Town, and beat the enemy on the other side of Trent. Whereas if somewhat be not done in this, you will see Newcastle's Army march up into your bowels; being now, as it is, on this side Trent. I know it will be difficult to raise thus many in so short a time; but let me assure you it's necessary and therefore to *be* done. At least do what you may, with all possible expedition! I would I had the happiness to speak with one of you:—truly I cannot come over, but must attend my charge; the Enemy is vigilant. The Lord direct you what to do.

"Gentlemen, I am,

"Your faithful servant,

"OLIVER CROMWELL."

"The Lord direct you what to do!" The words came like a cry. Cromwell knew, none better, that the help he needed so urgently was beyond the power of such men as he addressed to procure, and that the only chance of success for his demand would have been his own presence among them. "I would I had the happiness to speak with you." "Truly I cannot come over, but must attend my charge; the enemy is vigilant." "And," he might have added, "my friends weak or lukewarm."

In vain was his stern warning, "If somewhat be not done in this, you will see Newcastle's army march up into your bowels."

While Cromwell's army retired to Huntingdon, rested, and kept watch upon events, its commander planning where he would strike when he received such help as the Association could rake together for him, Newcastle's army was flooding the country in every direction like a springtide. Gainsborough yielded, Lincoln was taken, and on the 5th of August, nine days after Cromwell's exploit, Lord Willoughby was writing lugubriously from Boston, whither he had retreated in haste:—

[1] "Since the business of Gainsborough the hearts of our men have been so deaded that we have lost most of them by running away. So that we were forced to leave Lincoln upon a sudden; and if I had not done it then, I should have been left alone in it. So that now I am at Boston, where we are very poor in strength, so that without some speedy supply I fear we shall not hold this long neither.

"My Lord General, I perceive, hath writ to you to draw all the forces together. I should be glad to see it; for if that will not be, there can be no good to be expected. If you will endeavour to stop my Lord of Newcastle, you must presently draw them to him and fight him! For without we be masters of the field, we shall be pulled out by the ears, one after another.

"The Foot, if they will come on, may march very securely to Boston: which, to me, will be very considerable to your Association. For if the enemy get that Town, which is now very weak for defence for want of

[1] Carlyle, Part ii. p. 128.

men, I believe they will not be long out of Norfolk and Suffolk.

"I can say no more: but desire you to hasten; and rest,

"Your Servant,

"FRANCIS WILLOUGHBY."

We have quoted the letter in full, as not only does it put the situation in a nutshell, but it forcibly displays what manner of men Cromwell had to help him in this deadly crisis. Here is Cromwell's commentary thereon, addressed to the Commissioners of Cambridge, and sent on apparently to Parliament. A characteristic letter, red-hot and glowing even yet as a live coal. Often quoted before, but worth setting forth again :—

[1] "You see by Enclosed how sadly your affairs stand. It's no longer Disputing, but Out instantly all you can! Raise all your Bands; send them to Huntingdon; get up what Volunteers you can; hasten your Horses.

"Send these letters to Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex without delay. I beseech you spare not, but be expeditious and industrious! Almost all our Foot have quitted Stamford: there is nothing to interrupt an Enemy, but our Horse, that is considerable. You must act lively: do it without distraction. Neglect no means!

"I am, your faithful servant,

"OLIVER CROMWELL."

This appeal stirred them at last. A few days later he writes from Peterborough :—

"I hold it very fit that you should hasten your horse at Huntingdon, and what you can speedily raise at Cam-

[1] Carlyle, Letter xiv. Part ii. p. 129.

bridge, unto me. . . . I beseech you hasten your levies, what you can; especially those of Foot

But though under pressure of the thumbscrew of necessity the counties were recruiting men, money was still behind-hand.

"The money I brought with me is so poor a pittance when it comes to be distributed amongst all my troops that, considering their necessity,—it will not half clothe them, they were so far behind,—if we have not more money speedily they will be exceedingly discouraged. . . . Gentlemen, make them able to live and subsist that are willing to spend their blood for you!"

The whole position was fast becoming desperate, and Cromwell, now the acknowledged leader of all movements in those parts, grimly bent his energies to concentrating the forces round about. "That so, if we be able, we may fight the enemy, or retreat unto you, with our whole strength."

There was nothing else to do but this, and wait; while darker and ever darker grew the sky.

South and West and North were all in the hands of the king, Gloucester the only town of importance holding out. A concentration of Royalist forces, a sharp determined march, and if Essex did not bestir himself at last, Charles would be at the gates of London.

CHAPTER VII

The first days of September 1643 saw the Parliament cause at its lowest ebb, but before the month ended the tide had turned.

Charles, who had postponed his march on London until he could take Gloucester, found the task harder than he expected. Though short of food, the town held bravely out, and sent urgent messages to London for relief. This supreme emergency roused even the slow nature of Essex. With the train-bands of London, and the remains of his original army, he took the offensive, and marched steadily westward, and on the 5th of September came in sight of Gloucester, still untaken. The king retreated at his approach, and the brave little city was relieved without a blow.

On the return journey to London the first battle of Newbury was fought between Essex and Charles. It was as indecisive an engagement as Edgehill. But Essex's journey to Gloucester had not been in vain. It had proved to the country that there was no party of influence among the Puritans in favour of making an ignoble peace.

There was, however, another reason besides the energy and resource of London merchants for the renewed confidence of Parliament. Negotiations had for some time been carried on with the Scots concerning a union of forces, and in September these came to a successful conclusion. Scotland at this time was Presbyterian to

the bone. Her ministers had the army and the people of the Lowlands behind them, and wielded enormous influence in affairs of State, as well as being practically dictators in all matters of religion. The Highlanders, and many of the great nobles, refused to acknowledge this supremacy; but by the bulk of the nation, especially the powerful middle-classes, the Presbyters represented the highest authority in the land. Though there was no love lost at this time between England and Scotland, no "union" in any real sense of the word, the countries were too close together for a political crisis in one not to deeply affect the other. All Scottish statesmen knew that the nature of the government that was to be finally established at Westminster was vitally important to them. At first they passively watched the progress of events, but as the struggle became more desperate, they were gradually drawn into active intrigues. Both sides in England bid for their support, but only the Parliament could offer that which the dominant Scotch party wanted—namely, a promise of support of the Presbyterian religion. Charles, to his credit be it said, would not come to terms with a form of religious worship he detested. The Scotch, equally to their credit, would not support an "uncovenanted king." With the Parliamentarians it was not difficult to find a basis for agreement, as the leading men on that side were Presbyterians already. Yet the desire of the Scotch Presbyters that all English Puritans should bind themselves to become Presbyterians before an army crossed the Border, could not be entertained, and long and anxiously had the Parliamentary Commissioners in Scotland to labour before, in the month of September 1643, they produced an agreement which need not

offend the Puritan conscience, but which would content the Scots. It was accomplished at last, and on the 25th of the month "The Solemn League and Covenant" received the signatures of all the members of the House of Commons then present at Westminster, and copies were distributed throughout the country.

It was a momentous step, and, in view of the differences which afterwards arose between the two countries, an unfortunate one. Cromwell, who signed the Covenant with the rest, has been taken to task for it ever since. There is scarcely a doubt that could he have foreseen all that was about to happen, he would not have done it. The weakness of the case against him lies in the absolute impossibility of any one at that time, much less one whose mind was engrossed with the present crisis of affairs, forecasting the events which ultimately led to the breach between the army and Parliament and to the execution of the king. At that date—1643—it was a mere commonplace to promise, as the Covenant bound its signatories to promise, "To defend and preserve the king's person and authority in the preservation and defence of religion and liberty." The king, it was held then, had been led astray by evil counsellors. When these had been crushed, his Majesty, surrounded by a united Puritan party, would, under safeguards, become once more the monarch of a loyal people—a state of things, it may be noted, which Cromwell laboured strenuously to bring to pass five years later.

Then, concerning the first and most important clause of all: literally interpreted, as Cromwell and men of his opinion would interpret it, there was nothing inconsistent between the pledge he gave in 1645: "To preserve the reformed religion of Scotland, and to bring about the

reformation of religion in England, according to the Word of God and the examples of the best reformed churches, and so accomplish a uniformity of faith, worship, and discipline in the three kingdoms," and his action against Scotland in 1650.

Cromwell never desired to strike a blow at Presbyterianism in Scotland; and the wording of the Covenant, thanks to the efforts of the English Commissioners, did not necessarily imply that its signatories bound themselves to establish Presbyterianism in England. "A uniformity of faith, worship, and discipline" meant to Cromwell reasonable precautions that the doctrines of the Christian religion should be preached in the pulpits "according to the Word of God," and no more.

It may be argued that the Scots left no stone unturned to make it known that the main condition of their assistance was the establishment of Presbyterianism in England; and that Cromwell, who was never a Presbyterian, nor intended to become one, had no business to lend himself to such a policy. Those who hold this view fail to realise the desperate position of affairs, and the fearful responsibility which a man in Cromwell's position would have taken upon himself had he, through excessive tenderness of conscience, refused the Scottish terms and thrown the weight of his personality into accentuating the internal dissensions which were already beginning to threaten the Puritan party. Cromwell was no longer the mere colonel of a regiment. His name was known both to Royalists and Puritans as that of a soldier who had held his own in independent command against a superior force time after time, and who, when he engaged in battle, never failed to gain an advantage over the enemy. Small in number as his forces might be, the way they were

handled and their quality made them formidable. Their commander, therefore, was a man of mark and weight. What, then, was his duty? He believed, and rightly, that the only chance of success for the Puritan cause was for English and Scottish Puritans to join together. Cromwell was always an idealist in his belief in the union of peoples. Here was an opportunity to bring together—in the holy bonds of matrimony—two nations with deepest things in common. Their differences, Cromwell reasoned—being an essentially tolerant man himself—would be worn away by friendly contact and intercourse; and from the union a real "reformed" religion, pleasing to God and a blessing to mankind, would spring into being. For such reasons, and in such a spirit, we see no cause to doubt Cromwell signed the Covenant—a Covenant he loyally abided by until the English Presbyterians and their Scotch allies grossly violated its spirit in their treatment of the army; until the conduct and policy of Charles made the clause that concerned him a hollow mockery. That no union of peoples ever was, or could be, brought about by the signing of a covenant is true enough, but Cromwell is hardly to be blamed for failing, in common with the best men of his time, to understand this.

While the Covenant was being signed, affairs north of the Eastern Counties were gradually assuming a different complexion. All September Cromwell toiled at the uphill task of turning unpromising recruits into capable soldiers, and at inducing the unwilling inhabitants of East Anglia to send him the wherewithal to keep his men in bread and clothing. This last business was the hardest. Never was Cromwell's genius for taking infinite pains; for pursuing his purpose to the end, in the face of immense

difficulties, shown more clearly than in the way he procured forces and arms to defend the Eastern Counties, and, finally, formed an army which was mainly instrumental in conquering the North of England for the Parliament.

All through September he was writing with ever-increasing emphasis to his Committees. To Suffolk he wrote: "Believe it, you will hear of a storm in a few days! You have no Infantry at all considerable; hasten your Horses—a few hours may undo you, neglected." . . . And as a postscript to the letter, "If you send such men as Essex hath sent, it will be to little purpose. Be pleased to take care of their march; and that such may come along with them as will be able to bring them to the main Body; and then I doubt not but we shall keep them, and make good use of them."[1] Which looks as if it was more difficult to prevent men from deserting —until they were under Cromwell's eye—than it was to enlist them.

We get confirmation of this in the next letter to his cousin, Oliver St. John, the lawyer who defended Hampden when he was tried for non-payment of ship-money; also, we have the allusion to his own men, too characteristic and important to be omitted, though so often quoted. Of all Cromwell's letters this is couched in the least guarded language. He was writing privately to a friend:—

[2] "Sir,—Of all men I should not trouble you with money matters, did not the heavy necessity my Troops are in, press me beyond measure. I am neglected exceedingly!

"I am now ready for my march towards the Enemy; who hath entrenched himself over against Hull, my Lord

[1] Carlyle, Part ii., Letter xvi. p. 134. [2] Ibid., xvii. p. 136.

Newcastle having besieged the Town. Many of my Lord of Manchester's Troops are come to me; very bad and mutinous, not to be confided in; *they* paid to a week almost, *mine* no way provided for to support them, except by the poor Sequestrations of the county of Huntingdon! My Troops increase. I have a lovely company; you would respect them, did you know them. They are no 'Anabaptists'; they are honest sober Christians;—they expect to be used as men!

"If I took pleasure to write to the House in bitterness, I have occasion. Of the £3000 allotted me, I cannot get the Norfolk part nor the Hertfordshire; it was gone before I had it. I have minded your service to forgetfulness of my own and Soldiers' necessities. I desire not to seek myself;—I have little money of my own to help my Soldiers. My estate is little. I tell you, the business of Ireland and England hath had of me, in money, between Eleven and Twelve Hundred pounds; therefore my Private can do little to help the Public. You have had my money; I hope in God I desire to venture my skin. So do mine" (his own soldiers). "Lay weight their patience, but break it not! Think of that which may be a real help. I believe £5000 is due.

"If you lay aside the thought of me and my Letter, I expect no help. Pray for,

"Your true friend and servant,

"OLIVER CROMWELL.

"There is no care taken how to maintain that Force of Horse and Foot raised and a-raising for my Lord of Manchester. He hath no one able to put on" (push the business). "The Force will fall if some help not! All

will be lost if God help not! Weak counsels and weak actings undo all! Remember who tells you."

So wrote Cromwell on the 11th of September, with the bitterness of the man who is in deadly earnest, and is beginning to suspect that his superiors are not! On the 28th he wrote again to the Suffolk Committee of the Association, this time to tell them some good news. Though Newcastle had shut the Fairfaxes up in Hull, he could not command the sea. On the 20th September Cromwell and Lord Willoughby are reported to have crossed by boat to Hull, and arranged that Sir Thomas Fairfax, Lord Fairfax's son, should cross the Humber with the cavalry, twenty troops—between 1200 to 1600 men and horses—and join the army which was gathering in Lincolnshire under the Earl of Manchester.

This was accomplished apparently the same day, and after some difficult marching they reached the main army in spite of an attempt on the part of the Royalists to intercept them.

This put through, the long-planned work of freeing Lincolnshire of Royalists and advancing upon Newcastle began in earnest. It was not too soon. October had begun; in another two months winter would put an end to the campaign, and if something were not done before the spring, Fairfax might be obliged to surrender Hull, which would leave Newcastle free to throw his whole force upon the Eastern Counties.

All these possibilities Cromwell had foreseen long ago. Had he been able to have his own way he would have accomplished something in August, but there were "weak Counsels" and "weak Actings" above him; difficulties he could not yet grapple with. Chafing inwardly, he was obliged to wait until it pleased their Lordships (Manchester

and Willoughby) to move forward. This came to pass in October. The southern towns in Lincolnshire—Lynn and the rest—had been retaken, and on the 10th of October we hear that Manchester[1] "gave order that the whole force, both horse and foot, should be drawn up to Bolingbroke Hill, where he would expect the enemy, being the only convenient ground to fight with him. But Colonel Cromwell was no way satisfied that we should fight; our horse being extremely wearied with hard duty two or three days together."

It is difficult now to know accurately the details of a comparatively minor engagement; but there is little doubt that the battle which took place the next day, "Winceby Fight," was, strategically, a very clumsy piece of fighting indeed, though, thanks to the tactical ability of Cromwell, it proved very effective. Both armies fell upon one another without any plan of action having been thought out beforehand. The Parliamentary Chronicles state, "I believe that as we had no notice of the enemy's coming toward us, so they had as little of our preparations to fight them."

The night before the engagement Manchester's cavalry were hurried up from the skirmishing duty, which had worn them out, and rendered them physically very unfit for a hard day's fighting. As for the infantry, they arrived on the scene when the battle was practically over.

It was a sheer trial of strength and "force of arms." Cavalry against cavalry, some four thousand to five thousand men on either side.

The Parliament men advanced "singing Psalms." Their "word" was "Religion." The Cavaliers', "Caven-

[1] "God's ark overtopping the waters" (second book), p. 45. Vicars.

dish." As usual the dragooners on either side fired a volley as the troopers advanced to the attack. Cromwell with his own regiment was in the van, and by a shot from a second volley fired by the Royalists his horse was killed. Before he could get another mount he was knocked down by the charge of a troop of Cavaliers, and must have been severely bruised. When he rose again, however, his men were round him; one provided him with a horse, and he regained his position in the regiment. The charge of this regiment was so vigorous and well-delivered that it broke the Royalist first line, drove it back upon the reserves, and put them into confusion. Then was seen the difference of Cromwell's behaviour on the field from that of most of the Parliament commanders of that day. It had been their custom to pause and let the enemy retreat in fair order. That was not Cromwell's way. His men were weary, and he himself must have been sore and tired enough; but as soon as he saw the advantage gained, he determined to follow it up. Hour after hour he held his men to the pursuit. Every troop that tried to rally was crushed or cut down; a thousand prisoners were taken, thirty-five standards, and two thousand horses. One thousand men were slain. The work was not all done by Cromwell's regiment. He was nobly seconded by Fairfax. But it was Cromwell's charge which broke the Royalist line, and it was Cromwell's example which turned a mere victory of arms into a virtual annihilation of the enemy.

The same day Lord Fairfax made a determined sally from Hull, and inflicted a severe check upon Newcastle; the result of which was, that upon hearing of the disaster at Winceby the Marquis drew off his army from the siege, and Lincolnshire, at one well-delivered blow, was free.

CHAPTER VIII

Winceby, and the raising of the siege of Hull, ended the autumn campaign in the North. The Eastern Counties were now safe for the winter; and in the spring the Scottish army, twenty-one thousand strong, under Lesley, Lord Leven, was to cross the Border. The Marquis of Newcastle, therefore, would have his hands full, and for three months Cromwell would be at comparative leisure. Parliament, however, had already recognised the advantage of giving so strong a man official authority and position, and in August had made him Governor of the Isle of Ely. After Winceby, so far as we know, he settled down in his own home and busied himself with local affairs, always, of course, with the burden and anxiety of providing for his soldiers, now in winter quarters, and preparing for a campaign in the spring. The chief incident which has come down to us of his life in this winter of 1643–4 relates, however, to something very different from the ordinary routine of building up resources for the struggle still to come, and strengthening anew the association of the Eastern Counties and its Committees.

Ely was, as it is now, a cathedral town, and High-Church principles and practices—Episcopalianism of a pronounced kind—were dear to the hearts of all its clergy. It was hard upon these reverend gentlemen that in their midst should reside the most strenuous of the advocates of a "Reformed Church," a man who

knew neither fear nor favour when his conscience stirred within him, and whose power in his own county was absolute.

Under such circumstances it is interesting and instructive to consider for a moment the Cromwell whom his detractors delight in depicting—a stern, gloomy fanatic, eaten up with a half-insane, entirely vindictive hatred for the dignity of the Church; glad to seize at any opportunity of tearing away her authority and possessions; insulting and oppressing her ministers; rudely encouraging his soldiers to destroy all her beautiful heirlooms of the past, her sculptures, painted windows and the like—in fact, the arch-enemy of the Church at a time when she was attacked by many enemies.

Such is Cromwell as he presents himself to the orthodox mind even of the present day. Pilgrims go to Ely Cathedral, to Peterborough, to many lesser churches, and when they see the headless angels, saints, and virgins, and hear of priceless works of art which had been reverently cherished for centuries knocked to atoms by the arquebuses of Puritan soldiery, they raise their hands with a shudder, and exclaim "Cromwell's work!" To their imaginations, stimulated by a score of legends greedily devoured, and implicitly believed—as legends always are when they coincide with our preconceived ideas—legends too, printed in large type by grave and reverent historians—Cromwell was the leader of ignorant zealots, beloved of the lay-preachers who stepped into pulpits in buff and steel; indeed, a lay-preacher himself on occasion. It is Cromwell the regicide, the tyrant, the "unspeakable!" He, above all others, is the man all churchmen who love their Church must loathe and execrate for evermore.

Truly the "judgment of posterity" is a strange and wonderful thing.

What are the facts? In the first place, it may be said at once that Cromwell must take his share of responsibility of the reaction against "Laudism" and ecclesiastical authority of all kinds, a reaction which undoubtedly ran to excess, and did many things it ought not to have done. It is disputable how far Cromwell could have prevented the destruction of sculpture and art which bitter Puritans, military and otherwise, believed to be a sacred and imperative duty; and it may reasonably be argued, that had he tried, he might have prevented much more than he chose to do. There is no evidence that in the early days of the war he thought such destruction wrong; while it is undeniable that he felt most strongly that at any cost the tyranny of the Church, which Laud and his disciples had built up previous to 1640, must be smitten hip and thigh; and that where he did strike, he was apt to be heavy-handed.

All this may be freely acknowledged; though, whether Cromwell and the rest of the Puritans had not sufficient provocation given them to have done even worse than deface statuary—had they wished to exact their pound of flesh for the misery and loss of self-respect, the constant petty cruelties and outrages to which they had formerly been subjected—may be left an open question. The main point is, that to substantiate the charge made against Cromwell it must be demonstrated that he persecuted Episcopalian clergy vindictively and unreasonably. That he drove them from their churches and their homes and livings, as "preaching-ministers" had been driven by Laud. That from the day that he grew to be a power, and not till then, the lives of all such clergymen were subjected

to every kind of insult and hardship, and harried as the monks were harried by Henry VIII.

So far as we are aware, no proof has ever been produced that in any single instance Cromwell was ever personally responsible for such treatment of clergymen; that he ever uttered a word in public urging such treatment; or that he ever gave an order to his soldiers to desecrate a church or cathedral, or lent a hand himself in such work, unless it be at Peterborough, and of this there is no conclusive evidence.

It is quite true that as Governor of the Isle of Ely, and as a man under the "authority" which had passed order after order against all kinds of High-Church services, he forcibly intervened to put an end to such services probably on many occasions. But that is quite another thing.

At Ely Cathedral, for instance, a certain "Reverend Mr. Hitch," though a close neighbour of Cromwell's, was, so late as January 1643–4, in spite of warnings, steadily pursuing what he thought to be his duty, and carrying on in the face of all Parliamentary "orders" the services of the Church of England in a very ritualistic form. He had, presumably, been doing this all through the months when Cromwell was raising his regiment, when the Puritans were in full possession of the power of the sword in his locality, and after Cromwell had been made governor of the town for the space of five months. Yet he had never been molested. This fact is worthy of consideration.

In January 1643–4 the scandal of the defiance of Parliament became too great to be endured, and Cromwell was now able to gratify any spleen he might feel against the Church in any manner he saw fit. Behind him was the authority of Parliament, supreme in these

parts; around him were his own soldiery, eager to make the most of the least hint from him that an obnoxious "priest" was at their mercy.

On the 10th of January this letter left his pen—

"To the Reverend Mr. Hitch, at Ely: These—

"Mr. Hitch,[1] — Lest the Soldiers should in any tumultuary or disorderly way attempt the reformation of the Cathedral Church, I require you to forbear altogether your Choir-service, so unedifying and offensive: and this as you shall answer it, if any disorder should arise thereupon.

"I advise you to catechise, and read and expound the Scriptures to the people; not doubting but the Parliament, with the advice of the Assembly of Divines, will direct you farther. I desire your Sermons where usually they have been—but more frequent.

"Your loving friend,

"Oliver Cromwell."

A letter doubtless very "unedifying and offensive" to Mr. Hitch. No peace or good-will could exist where such differences of opinion existed between two men on subjects both felt to be sacred. Not otherwise peculiarly objectionable; indeed, were it possible to ascertain the honest opinion of Mr. Hitch about Cromwell, it is probable that, setting these differences aside, we should find that this soldier, Nonconformist as he was, was neither loathed nor feared, as diligent readers of "Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy" and books of a like nature have brought themselves to believe.

[1] Carlyle, Part ii., Letter xix. p. 145.

A Nonconformist Cromwell certainly was; a non-believer in the Established Church; a staunch upholder within reasonable bounds of the creed of the Puritans of the day, that the services of the Anglican Priests were "monuments of Superstition and Idolatry," and must be put down. But in no sense was he a persecutor of men who differed from him in these matters; and he proved himself essentially one who, from the beginning to the end of his life, opposed with all his strength personal violence upon any minister of religion whatsoever. Mr. Hitch, we are led to imagine, showed himself to be of this opinion. He took no notice of the letter, continued his "choir-service," and calmly awaited the consequences.

One Sunday, therefore, we read that Cromwell walked into the Cathedral, soldiers in the nave to support him, and in a voice that seems to come ringing back from those days, announces sternly, yet with quiet restraint of tone—

[1] "I am a man under authority, and am commanded to dismiss this assembly."

He then "draws back a little." Upon this Mr. Hitch, who had stopped, began again. Instantly the heavy step clanged on the pavement, and in a voice, unrestrained this time, rolling like harsh thunder through the great building, the Governor of Ely exclaimed—

"Leave off your fooling and come down, sir."

This order Mr. Hitch, who apparently had no desire for the crown of martyrdom, promptly obeyed, and the incident was at an end.

A word more may be said about the desecration of sacred edifices laid to Cromwell's charge. He tolerated

[1] Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy, Part ii. p. 23.

much of this mischievous and regrettable irreverence, the outcome of ignorance, and reactionary violence against symbols and ceremonies, of which the intrinsic sacredness had been unduly exaggerated in the past. That is to his discredit; but it is not at all certain that he always did this. A story, which, coming as it does from a strictly Episcopal source, may reasonably be supposed to have a foundation in fact, may be fitly quoted here:—

In Cambridge in 1646, or thereabouts—dates are not the strong points of tradition—a certain man, a monomaniac on the subject of smashing painted windows and beheading innocent stone cupids, was pursuing his pastime with great activity among the college chapels, supported by the populace of the town and soldiery. No one dared to interfere with him, and he was destroying treasures of art right and left, when one day it became known to the authorities of King's College that on a certain night the beautiful painted windows of the chapel were marked down for destruction. They were in despair, until the Provost recollected that he was a friend of Cromwell's. To Cromwell he went forthwith, though the position was delicate, as it was said Cromwell's own men were sharing in the work of the destroyers.

After a little thought, it is said Cromwell promised to do his best, and ordered a company of Musketeers to quarter in the chapel that night. He said nothing about protecting the windows, but instructed them to keep the peace there, and 'let none interfere with them.' Late in the evening the crowd assembled for their customary sport. Before they had time to begin operations, however, they were confronted by a file of armed men, who

briefly ordered them to go about their business. The mob protested; their leader declared himself to have been especially appointed by Parliament and the Westminster Assembly of Divines to seek out and destroy all 'things savouring of the Pope and the Devil' in King's Chapel. But these arguments made not the least impression upon the Musketeers. They had their orders from Cromwell, they said, and Parliament and the Divines notwithstanding, those orders, and those alone, they would obey. The crowd must depart, and without disturbance; King's Chapel and all that it contained must be left in peace.

Thus, the story goes, were the windows of King's Chapel preserved. And as witness of the deed, they are to be seen there now, the only painted windows anterior to the Commonwealth time to be found in Cambridge.

We do not guarantee this legend, though we took some trouble to inquire as to its origin; but it is characteristic, and, considering the rich growth on the other side, we may piously hope that it will become popular.

Cromwell's reputation, however, for being far ahead of most Puritans of his day in his tolerance of differences of religion does not rest upon tradition or anecdote. It was a time when the opinions on this subject of every man of mark were keenly canvassed and criticised. The leading men in Parliament, the large majority of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster—a body of ministers appointed to construct a new "reformed" Church and form of worship in place of the old "establishment"—were Presbyterians of a bigoted kind. It was they who had held out the hand of friendship to the Scots, and they subscribed to the Covenant with full determination that the teachings of all clergy, the worship of all Chris-

tians, must conform to the very letter of the "true faith." They were good men, these divines. "Godly," in the most literal sense of the word; pure in private life, and incorruptible as public servants; many of them great scholars; all as worthy as any mortal men could be of the tremendous responsibility of deciding of what true religion consisted; what prayer-book should be used by a nation; what catechism taught. Their fault was that they were but men. Among Laud and the Prelates, among the Cardinals and the Priests of the Roman Catholic Church, as good, as pure, as scholarly men could also have been found. Yet the ministers of these bodies were now condemned by our excellent Presbyters as liars and emissaries of the Evil One, enemies of God and Christ.

And the serious side of the question was that these most narrow-minded godly men held the first place in the nation of Scotland, that they were now represented on the Border by an army of twenty-one thousand men, and were very nearly all-powerful in the Parliament which governed the English Puritan party. Very nearly all-powerful, but not quite, and, as it happened, never to be so. This fact, which saved infinite misery and shame from being inflicted upon hundreds of thousands of Englishmen of all parties, and more especially those of an Episcopal way of thinking, is due to Cromwell. There were, it is true, many of his opinion, many who, as time went on, espoused the cause of tolerance and fought nobly for it, but without Cromwell the efforts of others would have been of no avail. But for his strenuous championship and fearless outspoken rejection of the bigoted policy of the chief men of his party at a time when such utterance spelt political ruin to all except the very strongest, and danger

even to these, the cause of tolerance and religious freedom would have been crushed for many a long day.

But Cromwell recked little of political power, and nothing at all of personal danger, when a matter of conscience was at stake. No sooner did the influence of the Divines at Westminster and the appearance of Scotch generals in the army begin to bear hardly upon all Puritans not of the Presbyterian faith, than Cromwell threw himself into the contest heart and soul. Those who consider Cromwell a cautious and acute time-server in his attitude towards religion have never studied this period of his life. Nothing from the point of view of policy could have been more ill-timed than his famous letter to Major-General Crawford, reproving him for "turning off" one Lieutenant-Colonel Packer for being loose in his religious beliefs. It offended Crawford mortally, it stamped Cromwell in the eyes of all Presbyterians as an apologist of "Sectaries" and worse, and from that hour set against him the whole of the Scottish nation. But, though he must have been well aware of the storm his action would bring down upon his head, he struck out boldly at the very heart of the position taken up by the chiefs of his party and their powerful allies. It would almost seem as if he were glad of the opportunity.

"To Major-General CRAWFORD: These—

"CAMBRIDGE, 10*th March* 1643.

"[1] SIR,—The complaints you preferred to my Lord (Manchester) against your Lieutenant-Colonel, both by Mr. Lee and your own Letters, have occasioned his stay

[1] Carlyle, Part ii., Letter xx. p. 147.

here: my Lord being employed in regard of many occasions which are upon him, that he hath not been at leisure to hear him make his defence; which, in pure justice, ought to be granted him or any man before a judgment be passed upon him.

"During his abode here and absence from you, he hath acquainted me what a grief it is for him to be absent from his charge, especially now the regiment is called forth to action: and, therefore, asking of me my opinion, I advised him speedily to repair unto *you*. Surely you are not well advised thus to turn off one so faithful to the Cause, and so able to serve you as this man is. Give me leave to tell you, I cannot be of your judgment: if a man notorious for wickedness, for oaths, for drinking, hath as great a share in your affection as one who fears an oath, who fears to sin—that this doth commend your election of men to serve as fit instruments in this work!

"Ay, but the man 'is an Anabaptist.' Are you sure of that? Admit he be, shall that render him incapable to serve the Public? 'He is indiscreet.' It may be so, in some things: we have all human infirmities. I tell you, if you had none but such 'indiscreet men' about you, and would be pleased to use them kindly, you would find as good a fence to you as any you have yet chosen.

"Sir, the State, in choosing men to serve it, takes no notice of their opinions; if they be willing faithfully to serve it,—that satisfies. I advised you formerly to bear with men of different minds from yourself: if you had done it when I advised you to it, I think you would not nave had so many stumbling-blocks in your way. It may be you judge otherwise; but I tell you my mind.—I desire you would receive this man into your favour and

good opinion. I believe, if he follow my counsel, he will deserve nothing but respect from you. Take heed of being sharp, or too easily sharpened by others, against those to whom you object little but that they square not with you in every opinion concerning matters of religion. If there be any other offence to be charged upon him—that must in a judicial way receive determination. I know you will not think it fit my Lord should discharge an Officer of the Field but in a regular way. I question whether you or I have any precedent for that.

"I have not further to trouble you: but rest,

"Your humble servant,

"OLIVER CROMWELL."

Cromwell was a Lieutenant-General by this time, and ranked above Crawford. The outcome to Packer we do not know, but the consequences to Cromwell of this and other like actions were very great. It was the beginning of the hardest of all the battles he was to have in the long years that followed: the battle for tolerance against bigotry; of Free Christianity against "the Priest writ large."

CHAPTER IX

Cromwell first took the field in February of the new year, in command of an expedition conveying ammunition to Gloucester, which work he successfully accomplished. On the way back he stormed Hillesden House, took Banbury, and secured Sleaford. These successes, coming at a time when people were unaccustomed to swift determined action on the part of Parliamentary commanders, made a great impression on the public. But they were unimportant in themselves. The most pregnant incident at this time was a certain speech made by Cromwell in the House of Commons in the month of January. It was the beginning of a campaign of another sort, a campaign fraught with consequences which those who listened to the speech—still less the man who spoke—little dreamed.

On January 22nd Cromwell "stood up" in Parliament "and desired that the Lord Willoughby of Parliam, who had commanded in Lincolnshire as Sergeant-Major-General of the forces there, might be ordered to stay away, and to go no more thither; and that the Earl of Manchester might be made Sergeant-Major-General of that county as well as of the other Associated Counties."

There was a "scene" in the House after this statement, as might well be expected. In the first place, Cromwell had acted in Lincolnshire more or less under his Lordship's authority; in the second place, for a commoner to

calmly take a Peer of the realm to task as if he were an ordinary citizen was an extremely audacious proceeding.

But Cromwell had his reasons, and gave them. "The Lord Willoughby," he stated, amid the murmurs of an excited House, "quitted Gainsborough when he" (the speaker) "was not far off with forces to relieve him; that he quitted the city of Lincoln, and left powder, match, and arms there, and seven great pieces mounted, with all the carriages, which the enemy made use of against the Parliament's forces; that he had very loose and profane commanders under him." A fairly heavy indictment this, but Cromwell was not satisfied. Roused, probably, by exclamations of incredulity on the part of his Lordship's friends, he went into particulars concerning this "looseness and profanity," which are not nice reading.

When Cromwell sat down a storm of abuse arose, which, had it succeeded in its object of inducing the House to discredit his statements, would have placed him in a very serious position. But no brow-beating, scepticism, or the rancour of partisans could move Cromwell from his point, or dispose of his evidence, and after a "wrangle for an hour or two," Lord Willoughby's friends found themselves in a minority; and a resolution was passed requesting Essex, as Commander-in-Chief, to grant the commission to Manchester.

It was a heavy blow well delivered, and its success signified more than the most enthusiastic supporter of Lord Willoughby imagined. Cromwell's bitter struggles of the summer and the early autumn with "weak counsels and weak actings," had opened his eyes to a state of things which caused him to turn the full force of his resolute will against the leaders of the Parliament army.

He saw with intense clearness that if these leaders continued to hold chief command the cause was doomed to failure, or, at the best, a very small measure of success. The lack of determination, the personal jealousies, and the feebleness of character and want of initiative to be found among the grandees of the Parliament army, disgusted and dismayed Cromwell. He felt that at all costs this abuse of power must not continue. The time had not yet come, however, for any active step other than striking at Lord Willoughby. In March, after the expedition to Gloucester, Cromwell was ordered back to Lincolnshire, and not before it was time. An attempt had been made upon Newark by Sir John Meldrum, so ill-judged and ill-timed, that not only was he unable to take the place, but, being attacked unexpectedly by Rupert, his whole force was captured, disarmed, and scattered. As a result of this disaster Lincoln and Gainsborough again fell into Royalist hands.

The advantage, however, was only temporary. The Scots had crossed the Tweed in January, and were advancing steadily southward to join Fairfax; while Manchester, with Cromwell again at his side, advanced rapidly to the rescue and retook every town south of Trent except Newark. Prince Rupert, who had with him only an inconsiderable force of cavalry, thereupon retreated to Lancashire.

Matters in the North were now beginning to look serious for the king. Newcastle's army, worn and decimated with disease and hard fighting, retreated to York, and in June was blockaded there by the Scots under Lord Leven, aided by a contingent of Yorkshiremen under Fairfax, and the Earl of Manchester's army, of which Cromwell was Lieutenant-General. The allies

numbered from 24,000 to 27,000 men,[1] Newcastle's army under 5000. It was therefore evident that unless succour speedily arrived Newcastle's army was doomed. But the help came. Rupert, with characteristic rapidity of movement, swept up all the forces obtainable in Lancashire and marched upon York with some 14,000 men. He reached the city and relieved it on July 1st, slipping past the allied armies by a clever manœuvre the day before. The Parliamentary generals, giving up the siege as hopeless, prepared to retreat southward. They spent the night of July 1st in the village of Long Marston, eight miles from York, and early the next morning their infantry marched out toward Tadcaster. The cavalry, however, under Fairfax and Cromwell, remained on the ridge of wood above Marston to guard against any sudden attack from Rupert. Before noon they saw the enemy advancing in considerable numbers, and sent word to the foot to return. By four o'clock the armies were facing one another, drawn up "in battalia," each hesitating to make the first forward movement, and waiting for the other to attack. In numbers the allied armies had the advantage—the Scots alone were estimated at 13,500, Fairfax from 3000 to 4000, Manchester 8000, a total equal to about 25,000. The Royalists, on the other hand, at the most mustered 17,000, of which between 14,000 and 15,000 were Rupert's own army, Newcastle's available force being only 3000 men.

It is not within the compass of this work to describe in detail any of the battles of the Civil War. This has been done by other and abler hands. But no biography of Cromwell would be complete, or indeed worthy of

1 "Marston Moor:" C. H. Firth, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 1898.

the name, without more than a passing glance at Marston Moor. The significance of that engagement, and Cromwell's share in it, cannot easily be over-estimated. He was only second in command of one of three armies. His regiments, 3000 to 4000 strong, numbered less than a sixth of the force to which they were attached. Further, it must not be forgotten that at that time Cromwell, as an Independent and so-called "leader of sectaries," was in bad odour with the Scottish generals, while his influence even with his own commander was already waning. Therefore, his authority in the army went just so far as his rank entitled him to carry it, but not a step further. Moreover, to make his position as difficult as it could well be, he found himself opposed by the cream of the Royalist army, commanded by Rupert in person. It was in every sense a crisis in Cromwell's military career, and one in which he was to be tried by fire.

He had two advantages: one, that under him were men he had trained with his own hand, and who had a record as good, though not as famous, as Rupert's own; the other, that his second in command, Major-General David Leslie, was a soldier of even greater experience than himself. Nominally, Leslie was only responsible for three regiments of Scottish cavalry, but Mr. Firth[1] has established the brave Scotsman's claim to a worthy second place in the great victory. In all probability he was in command of Cromwell's second line as well as his own regiment, which formed the reserve of the left wing.

The battle began between six and seven in the evening. To the right of Cromwell's cavalry were the infantry of Manchester's army; Baillie's Scottish regiments of foot formed the centre; Fairfax's army the right wing. In

[1] "Marston Moor:" *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 1898.

the matter of ground the Royalists had a great advantage. Directly in front of their first line ran a deep ugly ditch, which Rupert had lined with musketeers, and in crossing which the Parliamentary cavalry would be sure to get into disorder. In Cromwell's case the position was especially critical; for while Rupert had ample room to manœuvre as he pleased, Cromwell, after crossing the ditch, "must go forward, or his troops would be thrown back and crushed there."[1]

The attack began by a simultaneous advance of the whole of the Parliament line. Watson, Scoutmaster-General to Manchester's army, gives a vivid account of it, the best that has been left to us:—

"We came down the hill in the bravest order, and with the greatest resolution that ever was seen. (I mean the left wing of our horse, led by Cromwell.) Our front divisions of horse charged their front. Lieutenant-General Cromwell's division of 300, in which himselfe was in person, charged the first division of Prince Rupert's, in which himselfe was in person. The rest of ours charged other divisions of theirs, but with such admirable valour as it was to the astonishment of all the old soldiers of the army. Cromwell's own division had a hard pull of it: for they were charged by Rupert's bravest men both in front and flank. They stood at the sword's point a pretty while, hacking at one another."

This, as far as we can ascertain, gives a true picture of the first onset. Rupert was not present at the attack on his first line; but when that was broken, as it apparently was immediately, he led his reserves in person, and then the Cromwellian regiments had their hands full. Rupert's charge indeed, though stubbornly met,

[1] "Marston Moor:" *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 1898, p. 44.

bore Cromwell's first line back. Cromwell himself was wounded, and for a little while the result looked doubtful enough. But not for long. Rupert was using the whole of his force, while Cromwell had still his second line under Leslie, and the three regiments of Scottish horse. This second line now threw itself upon Rupert's rear and right flank. As they charged Cromwell rallied his men, who were slowly retreating; and so perfect was their discipline that they at once renewed the attack, and, with Leslie's aid, drove the Cavaliers in confusion before them.

This disposed of the Royalist left wing; but Cromwell, unlike Rupert, did not exhaust his men by allowing them to chase the broken regiment off the field. Once satisfied that he had routed the prince, he got his men into hand again and reformed them, only sending a few squadrons—probably his reserve, the three regiments of "little light Scotch nags"—to prevent any danger of Rupert rallying his men.

It was now to be seen what had happened to the rest of the army. When Cromwell's quick eye ranged eastward, where the Royalist centre and left wing had been, and southwards, where his allies had stood, he saw what must have caused him deep anxiety. In every direction the Parliamentary forces had been beaten. After some temporary success Fairfax's horse on the right wing had been broken in pieces by Goring and Lucas, the generals commanding the Royalist left. Thereupon the foot, upon which part of the cavalry was driven, collapsed, and fled also. This broke up the centre, and, with the exception of Cromwell's horse, the whole army was within an ace of being routed past recovery. But some five Scottish regiments in the centre, though ter-

ribly hard pressed, held their ground stubbornly, while two on the right, Lindsay's and Maitland's, preserved an unbroken front to the tornado of cavalry charges and the fierce onslaughts of the Royalist foot.

Such was the position of affairs which confronted Cromwell with his cavalry, and Manchester's foot under Major-General Crawford. The fate of the day depended upon them, their action depended upon Cromwell. It was at this juncture that Cromwell's tactical genius first displayed itself on a large field of action, as it had already done in a smaller one before Gainsborough. The obvious thing to do —and there is little doubt that Cromwell was strongly urged to do it—was to attack with all his strength the Royalist centre that was dashing itself against the half-dozen regiments which alone had contrived so far to withstand it. This most commanders would have done. But Cromwell, holding in check his own impetuosity, turning a deaf ear to the impatience of his lieutenants, and keeping a calm mind in all the stress and heat and clamour about him, saw that this would never do. His infantry he despatched under Crawford to relieve the Scottish regiments; his cavalry he led in person past the confused mass of struggling men in the centre, across the moor eastwards, traversing the ground north of the great ditch where the Royal army had lately stood, towards the place where the Cavaliers under Goring and Lucas had routed Fairfax. At his approach these men, who had fallen as usual upon the Parliament baggage-waggons, reformed their line and met his onset as best they could. Probably they had not time to put themselves into order. However this may be, they were broken at the first charge, and fled to the gates of York. Then, but not till then, Cromwell turned the whole strength of his

regiments against the centre, and, tired as his men must have been, their discipline and training were such that they fought steadily until dark, until not a regiment of the Royalists was left upon the field.

Such was Marston Moor. In courage and endurance there was little to choose between the Scottish regiments which stood firm while on every side their allies were flying in panic, and Cromwell's cavalry, who put to flight in succession both wings of the Royalist army, including Rupert and his hitherto invincible Cavaliers. But the generalship to which, apart from the valour of an army, victory is due, belongs to Cromwell, and to Cromwell alone; that he was ably aided by David Leslie is no doubt true. That he had the finest men in the allied forces to work with is no less true; but the steadiness and skill of the "Ironsides" came largely from the training he had given them; and the action taken in the supreme emergency when the Parliament army was all but annihilated—that of seeking Goring and the cavalry and disposing of them before attacking the Royalist foot—sprang from Cromwell's brain, and turned what might have been an engagement as indecisive as Edgehill or the second battle of Newbury into the first crushing defeat the Royalists had received.

CHAPTER X

Marston Moor placed the North of England at the mercy of the Parliament. It would have done much more had the victorious army been under the command of one vigorous mind, or had the generals who divided the authority been bound together by a common purpose. As matters stood, no sooner had Newcastle been driven into exile, and Rupert fled to Lancashire with a handful of men, than dissensions arose among the Parliamentary commanders, which threatened to do irreparable injury to the Puritan cause.

The religious question was the rock upon which they split. The Scots had been horrified for some time past to find that in the English armies, especially in Manchester's, there were numbers of soldiers whose ideas of religion were strongly opposed to Presbyterianism; and that these men, being staunch fighters, of sober lives, and keeping well under discipline, were "encouraged" by Manchester's Lieutenant-General of the Horse, as indeed his letter to Crawford conclusively proved. This, the Scots held, was a direct violation of the Covenant, and must be put down by Parliament.

Fairfax and Manchester, though moderate men, were both Presbyterians, and in private conference with Lord Leven and his Scottish ministers, were easily persuaded to sign a letter to "The Committee of Defence for Both Kingdoms" on the 18th July, and request Parliament at an early date to take "the building of the House of God

and settlement of Church Government into their chiefest thoughts."

This request was tantamount to asking for the establishment of Presbyterianism as the lawful religion of the land, and has been justly called by Dr. Gardiner, "practically a declaration of war against Lieutenant-General Cromwell."[1]

For the time being, however, Cromwell paid no attention to this significant hint. His mind was wholly bent upon a vigorous prosecution of the war, and he now urged that as a first step they should besiege Newark. His advice was rejected. The other commanders thought that the best thing that could be done was to open peace negotiations with the king. In vain did Cromwell point out the vital necessity of giving his Majesty the strongest reasons for coming to terms with his "faithful Commons," by thoroughly beating him off the field. He was left in a minority of one. In truth the generals had begun to dread Cromwell more than the king. He was now "the great Independent." It was known that he placed what he called "the Cause" before any particular religious belief, Covenant, or person. Manchester, "that sweet meek man"; Leven, the cautious Scot; even Fairfax, as a Presbyterian, looked upon one who "favoured sectaries"; who openly maintained that no rank, wealth, or position excused "loose and profane" conduct in any man, as a person to be viewed with suspicion, and, if necessary, severely checked. The fact that Cromwell had rendered signal service to the cause only made him the more dangerous in their eyes, though it prevented more open expression of their feelings. As for Cromwell, when he saw that his counsels were not entertained, he spoke his

[1] Gardiner's Civil War, vol. ii. p. 3.

mind bitterly and plainly, and then relapsed into "grim despair,"[1] and awaited events. His feelings were shared by all the officers under him, and depression and ill-suppressed discontent began to spread through the armies of the Parliament. The Puritan cause, flashing up triumphantly at Marston, soon drooped again. In the North the presence of the Scottish army prevented much harm being done; but in the South an insidious disintegration was slowly but surely taking place in the Parliament forces from sheer weariness at a war that seemed as if it would never end, and a growing want of confidence in commanders who seemed incapable of winning a decisive victory—if, indeed, they wished to do so. In the month of August two armies were sent forth against the king, one under Sir William Waller, the other under Essex. The first deserted in such numbers that it could effect nothing; the second, being heedlessly led by its commander into Cornwall, an aggressively loyal county, fell short of food, and was hemmed in by Charles and obliged to yield unconditionally, Essex himself making his escape by boat to Southampton.

In this dilemma Parliament sent urgent word to the army of the Eastern Counties to march to the West and retrieve the day. Cromwell, it would seem, also received word of this, from a private source—his brother-in-law, Colonel Valentine Walton, to whom he at once replied with that trenchancy of language and significance of meaning he could only venture to express in a letter to a trusty friend. This letter shows with great distinctness how acute the internal disagreements among the Parliament commanders were becoming, and sets forth beyond dispute Cromwell's personal attitude.

[1] Gardiner's Civil War, vol. ii. p. 36.

"SLEAFORD, *6th* (or *5th*) *September* (1644).[1]

"SIR,—We do with grief of heart resent the sad condition of our army in the West, and of affairs here. That business has our hearts with it; and truly had we wings we would fly thither! So soon as ever my Lord (Manchester) and the Foot set me loose, there shall be in me no want to hasten what I can to that service.

"For indeed all other considerations are to be laid aside, and to give place to *it*, as being of far more importance. I hope that the Kingdom shall see that, in the midst of our necessities, we shall serve them without disputes. We hope to forget our wants, which are exceeding great, and ill cared for; and desire to refer the many slanders heaped upon us by false tongues to God,—who will, in due time, make it appear to the world that we study the glory of God, and the honour and liberty of the Parliament. For which we unanimously fight, without seeking our own interest.

"Indeed we never find our men so cheerful as when there is work to do. I trust you will always hear so of them. The Lord is our strength, and in Him is all our hope. Pray for us. . . .

"We have some amongst us much slow in action: if we could all intend our own ends less, and our ease too, our business in this Army would go on wheels for expedition!—because some of us are enemies to rapine and other wickednesses, we are said to be "factious," to "seek to maintain our opinions in religion by force,"—which we detest and abhor. I profess I could never satisfy myself of the justness of this War, but from the Authority of the Parliament to maintain itself in its rights; and in this Cause I hope to approve myself an honest man and single-hearted.

[1] Carlyle, Part ii., Letter xxiii. p. 156.

"Pardon me that I am thus troublesome. I write but seldom; it gives me a little ease to pour my mind, in the spite of calumnies, into the bosom of a Friend."

While this letter was being written the despatches arrived for the Earl of Manchester from Parliament urging him to march with all the speed he might to the relief of Waller, who, now that Essex's army had been annihilated, was awaiting the appearance of the king's triumphant forces, and, with his men deserting daily, was in a condition of mind bordering on desperation. Poor Waller! He was a brave and honourable man, of no mean ability, but as a leader of men he was a hopeless failure. No army he ever raised remained with him very long; and later, even Cromwell's own regiment—a loyal and long-suffering body of men—when placed under his command, passively mutinied, refusing to march or fight until Cromwell, who was sent post-haste by Parliament, had "reasoned" with them for three days.

But of Waller this at least may be said, he was the first to see that the present army of the Parliament must be placed upon an entirely different footing if it were to answer any useful purpose in the future. So far it had been composed of local levies, raised and paid by the several counties from which the recruits originally came. This system, adequate enough for purposes of defence, was disastrous where a large army was needed at a considerable distance from the homes of the soldiers. Exceptional men like Cromwell, with a far-reaching influence, might contrive to infuse enthusiasm among the better class of soldiers and overawe the weaker vessels; but ordinary commanders were helpless, and were obliged

either to march where their men wished to go, or lose the greater portion of them by desertion.

This fatal defect in organisation began, now, to be felt by every one in the Parliament forces. But there was something worse behind. "We have some amongst us most slow in action," Cromwell wrote to Walton. This and the sentence following were aimed, as Walton was aware, at the Earl of Manchester. In spite of the message of Parliament to hasten to the support of Sir William Waller, Manchester found constant excuses for delay, treating the request with contempt, and remaining stolidly impervious to all the arguments of Cromwell and other resolute members of his council of war. When at last he joined forces with Waller it was at Newbury. Here the king, marching from the West on Oxford and London, gave them battle. It was an indecisive though obstinately contested engagement. The Royalists seemed to have had rather the worst of it, but were able to make their escape that night without molestation. Controversy over Cromwell's conduct at Newbury has run high. He was freely accused of cowardice, and worse. The truth, after examination of much conflicting evidence, seems to have been that his position as commander of cavalry in a country intersected by hedges which were lined by musketeers,[1] was too unfavourable for him to effect anything of importance, and that the fault of his powerlessness lay rather in those who were responsible for placing him where he was, than with him or his men.

It may have been, however, that he did not throw himself into the fray with his accustomed energy. He was in a state of extreme despondency about the whole campaign, and had been too much accustomed to inde-

[1] Gardiner's Civil War, vol. ii. p. 50.

pendent command to be an altogether satisfactory subordinate when serving a man whom he despised, and even suspected of being half a traitor to the cause. On the other hand, it is only fair to say that a credible witness (evidence of Johnstone to the Committee of Both Kingdoms, 28th October 1644) stated that he "did very good service." Further, when, the next morning, it was found that Charles had escaped, Cromwell with Waller urged immediate pursuit and a second battle. This was not allowed by Manchester, whereupon Cromwell's bitterness deepened, and his suspicions grew. Meanwhile Charles reached Oxford in safety and was joined there with Rupert by 5000 men. A week later, emboldened by the bickerings of the Parliamentary leaders, his Majesty marched into their teeth to relieve Donnington Castle, an important stronghold near Newbury, which Manchester in his indecision and weakness of purpose had made no serious attempt to reduce. All Manchester did was to order Cromwell, when the approach of the royal army was announced, to intercept him with his cavalry. Cromwell's reply, much quoted by his enemies as rank insubordination, is sadly significant of the condition to which the army which had routed Rupert's host at Marston Moor had been reduced by the incompetency of its general.

"My Lord, your horses are so spent, so harassed out by hard duty, that they will fall down under their riders if you thus command them; you may have their skins, but you can have no service."

If this statement were true—and no one has ever denied it—there must have been a serious lack of insight and knowledge on the part of the Commander-in-Chief.

Matters between Cromwell and Manchester were fast

approaching a climax. The Lieutenant-General had his way about the horses; and while the Parliament army remained inactive, Charles, with 11,000 men, revictualled Donnington Castle at his leisure.

The Parliament generals held another council of war. Cromwell, in spite of the risk of fighting with weary, impoverished men, a risk he fully acknowledged, strongly favoured an immediate attack. He was supported by others, until Manchester, driven into a corner, delivered himself of these famous words, sworn to by a credible witness, and which, in Cromwell's opinion, caused him to stand forth as self-accused of lukewarmness in the cause—

"If we beat the king ninety and nine times, yet he is king still, and so will his posterity be after him; but if the king beat us once, we shall all be hanged, and our posterity made slaves."

To this speech, which it must be acknowledged contained a shrewd insight into the practical position of affairs, Cromwell characteristically made answer—

"My Lord, if this be so, why did we take up arms at first? This is against fighting ever hereafter. If so, let us make peace, be it never so base!"

Cromwell was angry, as well he might be—not merely angry, but desperate. He knew the difficulties and dangers of the Parliamentary position as well as Manchester, and he saw clearly that the only way out of them was vigorous, prompt action. They were as travellers in the midst of a rising flood: they might yet win safety by going boldly forward; stark ruin stared them in the face if they stood still. Yet we must not judge Manchester by Cromwell's standard. The Earl was neither a coward nor even a waverer in the cause.

The ideals of the men were different, their characters still more so.

Manchester's desire, put tersely by Dr. Gardiner, was "Peace, and a Puritan establishment under Charles"; Cromwell's, "War, until Charles was at their feet."

It was now to be seen which course recommended itself to Parliament. Never were its affairs more critical. True, its armies had fought so well of late that they need fear nothing under fair conditions; but the disorganisation at head-quarters, if it continued, would speedily dissipate the fighting power of the men. Already in many quarters the first enthusiasm for freedom, just laws, and a reformed religion was dying fast, a weary apathy taking its place.

What was needed now, if the whole country were not to turn to Charles and bid him come back on almost any terms, was an army of "regular" soldiers paid out of the Parliamentary exchequer, from funds raised over the whole country in the name of the Parliament—funds not dependent upon local effort or patriotism, but contributed by all according to their means. Such an army to be under the direct control of Parliament, who would appoint as its commanders men who looked upon the king and his officers simply as enemies to be beaten as soon and as thoroughly as possible.

The first conception of such a force is to be traced to Sir William Waller (see p. 101); but the man who, more than any other, brought it into the domain of practical politics was Cromwell. It was never Cromwell's habit to remain long in a state of passive opposition or discontent. While in the field he could do nothing unless he led a mutiny against Manchester, a course which he was the last man to take. But when the

campaign was over, and Charles had retired in good spirits to winter quarters at Oxford, Cromwell, released from his military duties, became not only a member of Parliament, but a member of the "Committee for the Defence of Both Kingdoms," which was, at least in name, responsible for the conduct of the war. It was then that ideas which had been making their way slowly into his great brain, and lying half dormant there, took shape in words and action. After long hesitation and deep thought he spoke his mind, and, as his custom was, he spoke in no uncertain tone.

CHAPTER XI

THE action of Cromwell in the House of Commons after the campaign of 1644 was a sure sign of his consciousness that the time had come for him to take a strenuous and leading part in the cause. If we except his attack on Lord Willoughby in January, we find that up to this memorable 25th of November, when he rose in his place to "exhibit a Charge against the Earl of Manchester," he had made little personal mark on the debates of the House. Indeed, he had seldom attended them. His reputation there and in the country at large rested on his military exploits in Lincolnshire, and more especially on his crowning service at Marston Moor. Probably, until he dared to charge Manchester, who was one of the most influential and best liked of the great Parliamentary noblemen, with "backwardness" and neglect, no one had thought of him in any other light than as a staunch and dependable soldier. But, now, all who had any insight into character must have been struck, whether favourably or otherwise, by the force and supreme fearlessness of this man, who, without hesitation or apology, arraigned at the bar of the nation one who in position and rank was so greatly his superior. It was true that in the army Manchester's hesitation and want of success at Newbury and elsewhere had been contrasted freely with Cromwell's decision at Marston Moor, but it was principally the officers of inferior rank who were of this opinion; while in the Scottish army, with certain exceptions—the

most notable of which was David Leslie—the "chief of sectaries" was hated and dreaded more than any other English Puritan. Cromwell's position, therefore, despite his services, was not a strong one in Parliament, and the accusation against Manchester was made at a bad time for his own interests.

To those, however, who study Cromwell's career carefully this will not be at all surprising.

It cannot be too often stated that the opinion so confidently expressed as to Cromwell's deep and cunning prognosis of future events is erroneous. For a man of such undoubted genius he was not far-sighted. He saw into a crisis with unerring keenness; his judgment of the best thing to do, or say, in an emergency was rarely at fault; and most important of all, the force of his personality was so great, that by the sheer strength of his convictions, expressed in vigorous though homely speech, he drew men with him, overawed opponents, and won his way in the teeth of bitterest opposition. But though no one knew more of the needs of the present than Cromwell, the possibilities of the future rarely troubled him. Therefore, to say, as so many historians have said, that Cromwell struck at Manchester in order that he might ultimately aggrandise himself, is, apart from all other considerations, giving Cromwell credit for a quality he did not possess. There was not a man in Parliament at that time who would have supported such a design. Another mistake made by these historians is their inability to perceive in Cromwell a virtue which shone out in the darkest periods of the Civil War, appeared most clearly after his great victories, and which, even amidst the trials and temptations of the Protectorate, stood high and pure above all his mistakes and failings,

like a lofty beacon light above cruel rocks and raging surges—the quality of patriotism and unselfish devotion to the cause to which he had dedicated his life.

On the 25th of November 1644 Cromwell rose in his place in Parliament to "exhibit a Charge" against the Earl. His attack was not unexpected, for the quarrel between these Parliamentary generals had been noised abroad, and Cromwell had personally given notice to the House of his intention. But all this must only have enhanced the excitement of men whose nerves were already highly strung and strained with the tension of an atmosphere full of electricity. The long struggle between Presbyterianism and Independency had already begun; the struggle between narrow, bigoted Church-government and freedom of religious worship and conscience; between men who would accept Charles at any price provided he would establish the Presbyter in place of the Priest; and the men who would have him at no price unless he would relinquish frankly, and for ever, his pretensions to absolute monarchical sovereignty. For the moment at least, Manchester and Cromwell were the champions of the opposing factions.

Cromwell made his charge pointedly, and without hesitating to impute to the Earl motives which to earnest men in the Commons were treasonable, whatever they might be to the majority of the Lords.

He stated, "That the said Earl hath always been indisposed and backward to engagements, and the ending of the War by the sword; and (always) for such a Peace as a (thorough) victory would be a disadvantage to;—and hath declared this by principles express to that purpose, and a continued series of carriage and actions answerable."

That was the charge; then followed a recital of facts to substantiate it:—

"That since the taking of York (the result of Marston Moor), as if Parliament had now advantage fully enough, he hath declined whatsoever tended to further advantage upon the enemy; (hath) neglected and studiously shifted-off opportunities to that purpose, as if he thought the King too low, and the Parliament too high,—especially at Donnington Castle.

"That he hath drawn the army into, and detained them in, such a posture as to give the enemy fresh advantage; and this, before his conjunction with the other armies, by his own absolute will, against or without his Council of War, against many Commands of the Committee of Both Kingdoms, and with contempt and vilifying of these Commands; and, *since* the conjunction, sometimes against the councils of war, and sometimes by persuading and deluding the Council to neglect one opportunity and with pretence of another, and this again of a third, and at last by persuading (them) that it was not fit to fight at all."

This notable speech, or fragment of a speech, roused the whirlwind—as Cromwell intended that it should. Manchester replied a week later, and the Lords, giving him their full support, appointed a Committee of six members to take evidence on both sides, and invited the Commons to join them; but this the Commons, jealous of their rights and privileges, declined.

Manchester's reply was ponderous and long-winded. He denied that he had ever taken action without consent of his council of officers; he maintained that most of his actions had been approved by Cromwell himself, and declared that Cromwell's own conduct had been anything but exemplary.

This was now the time for Cromwell's enemies to do their worst. The effect of Manchester's defence was to incline the Lords, and those who thought more of their personal safety and their money than of the cause they had nominally pledged themselves to support, to look upon Cromwell as an enemy to all property. His antagonism to any narrow sectarian form of religious worship, whether it were of Presbyter or Priest, was exaggerated into approval of every license and extravagance which the Anabaptists and others chose to commit. So far, no strong party had grown up either in Parliament or in the army pledged to support freedom and tolerance in religion.

The strength and bitterness of feeling against Cromwell is shown by a private meeting held on the 3rd of December, the day after Manchester delivered his counter-blast, at the house of the Earl of Essex. The conveners of the conference were the leading representatives of the Scottish nation. There were also present two eminent English lawyers, Whitelock and Maynard, but by invitation only. The subject of discussion was the best way of bringing Cromwell to judgment. It was suggested by the Scots that he should be impeached as "an incendiary between the two nations." But though by the law of Scotland[1] this charge might have been made good, the English lawyers shook their heads at the notion, and said there was not enough evidence. Further, said Maynard warningly, "Lieutenant-General Cromwell is a person of great favour and interest with the House of Commons, and with some of the Peers likewise."

In plain English, the astute lawyers intimated that, objectionable as some of the General's opinions might be,

[1] Gardiner, Civil War, vol. ii. p. 87.

all English Puritans knew that as long as their cause needed champions Cromwell could not be spared, and would not be. Therefore, let his enemies have a care!

After this the conference, in which it is said Essex took no part, broke up without result, the Scots deciding to defer the taking of any active steps until Cromwell should give them a better opportunity. But they had the wrong man to deal with. Cromwell heard of his danger, it is believed from Whitelock, and grasping the nettle boldly, defended himself in the House so vigorously and well, that the Commons, already offended at the Lords for taking action without first consulting them, gave him hearty support, and appointed a Committee to consider whether their privileges had not been trifled with. Up to this point Cromwell had fought his battle on personal lines, and won it. But he was the last man to allow any feud of his own to do harm to the cause, and he saw clearly that if the friction between the Houses grew serious, a rupture would follow between the men of his own way of thinking and the Presbyterians, so bitter that the whole party might be split in twain, and an opportunity given to Charles to undo by intrigue all that had been accomplished at the cost of so much blood and treasure. His chief desire, in the face of this danger, was to set aside all personal feeling, and to find in the desperate condition of affairs a remedy which, while acceptable to the majority of members of Parliament, would not necessarily rouse fatal antagonism in the Lords.

On the 9th of December, fifteen days after his first attack on Manchester, Cromwell again rose in the House to make a statement. It was directly after a report had been delivered by the chairman of the Committee appointed to deal with the dispute between the generals,

the gist of which report was an opinion that "the chief causes of our division are pride and covetousness."

The speech is not long, and we give it in full. It is one of the most powerful that Cromwell ever made:—

[1] "It is now a time to speak or for ever hold the tongue. The important occasion now, is no less than To save a Nation, out of a bleeding, nay, almost dying condition, which the long continuance of this War hath already brought it into; so that without a more speedy, vigorous, and effectual prosecution of the War—casting off all lingering proceedings like soldiers-of-fortune beyond sea, to spin out a war—we shall make the Kingdom weary of us, and hate the name of a Parliament.

"For what do the enemy say? Nay, what do many say that were friends at the beginning of the Parliament? Even this, That the Members of both Houses have got great places and commands, and the sword into their hands; and, what by interest in Parliament, what by power in the army, will perpetually continue themselves in grandeur and not permit the War speedily to end, lest their own power should determine with it. This I speak here to our own faces, is but what others do utter abroad behind our backs. I am far from reflecting on any. I know the worth of these Commanders, Members of both Houses, who are yet in power; but if I may speak my conscience without reflection upon any, I do conceive if the army be not put into another method, and the War more vigorously prosecuted, the People can bear the War no longer, and will enforce you to a dishonourable Peace.

"But this I would recommend to your prudence, Not to insist upon any complaint or oversight of any Commander-in-chief upon any occasion whatsoever; for as I

[1] Carlyle, Part ii. p. 131.

must acknowledge myself guilty of oversights, so I know they can rarely be avoided in military affairs. Therefore waving a strict inquiry into the causes of these things, let us apply ourselves to the remedy; which is most necessary. And I hope we have such true English hearts, and zealous affections towards the general weal of our Mother Country, as no Members of either House will scruple to *deny* themselves and their own private interests for the public good; nor account it a dishonour done to them, whatever the Parliament shall resolve upon in this weighty matter."

The speech was followed by a warm debate as to the "remedy" to be applied, which closed by a resolution proposed by Zouch Tate, seconded by Vane the younger:—

"That during the time of this War no Member of either House shall have or execute any command, military or civil, granted or conferred by both or either of the Houses."

This resolution, the first of the "self-denying ordinances, was passed readily by the Commons, and as readily thrown out by the Lords. Cromwell's sincerity in supporting it has been gravely questioned; but, so far as any evidence of the state of his mind at the time can be ascertained, unjustly so. Here are the words he is reported to have used during the debate, words difficult indeed to reconcile with any secret design or hope that his own services would still be retained:—

"Mr. Speaker,—I am not of the mind that the calling of the Members to act in Parliament will break, or scatter our Armies. I can speak this for my own soldiers, that they look not upon me, but upon you; and for you they will fight, and live and die in your cause; and if others be of that mind that they are of, you need not fear them.

They do not idolise me, but look upon the cause they fight for. You may lay upon them what commands you please, they will obey your commands in that Cause they fight for."

The rejection of this motion by the Lords, in spite of Cromwell's olive branch, brought the Houses into sharp collision. No open breach, however, occurred. On January 7th the Peers made answer that apart from the injustice such an ordinance would do to the members of their body who had done so much for the cause, it was bad policy to dismiss so many of the present officers of the army without first drawing up a list for approval of men who might take their places. This gave fresh impulse to the movement. The Committee for Defence of Both Kingdoms at once produced a long list of names, with Fairfax (a Presbyterian) as Commander-in-Chief, and Skippon (also a Presbyterian) as Major-General of Foot. The place of Lieutenant-General of Horse was left suggestively vacant. Upon receiving this practical answer to their objection the Lords began to give way; and in January they passed by one vote the second "self-denying ordinance" sent up to them by the Commons. This measure contained one very important modification of the original motion by providing that a member of either House, at the discretion of the Commission directed by Parliament to control the movements of the new army, might be appointed to a command.

This alteration, with which Cromwell had nothing to do, disposes of the case that has been made against him of scheming to provide a place for himself by ousting Manchester and Essex.

By the first "ordinance," to which he gave his vigorous support, he could not have found any excuse to

retain a command; but the same measure, when altered to suit the Lords, left the matter solely at the discretion of the men responsible for carrying on the war. What men in that position would do did not admit of doubt.

"The only soldier who had beaten Rupert in the field" was not the man to be spared if any way existed of keeping him in employment. His name, among friends and foes, stood first as the ablest cavalry officer on the Parliamentary side. His appointment, therefore, to the vacant post of Lieutenant-General in the "new model" could only, in the natural course of events, be a question of time.

CHAPTER XII

THE re-modelling of the army of the Parliament, after the second "self-denying ordinance" had been passed, resulted in a reconstitution of the whole force on new lines.

Up to this time, the spring of 1645, the Parliamentary forces, as has been stated (see p. 101), had been recruited locally. There were the train-bands of London, the Eastern Counties Association army, the Yorkshire levies under Fairfax, and so on. Many of the rank and file were volunteers, at least when they first joined. The consequence was a great want of uniformity in discipline and efficiency. Under Cromwell and Fairfax the men behaved splendidly, under Waller they deserted in troops. In some places they were paid with fair regularity, in others they received little or nothing.

As the country grew poorer the condition of the army became steadily worse. As supplies lessened week by week, so did the fighting strength of the regiments. The amount of hardship and misery cheerfully borne by the common soldiers of the Parliament army then and afterwards will never be known, and has certainly never been fully appreciated by historians; but the men were only human, and all officers of every grade and party shared Cromwell's convictions that unless the whole matter was placed upon another footing, the war would come to a speedy end through the soldiers refusing to fight.

No sooner, however, had the question of commanders

been settled than a thorough reorganisation of the rank and file was instituted, which put the position of the men on a new basis, and enabled the generals in command to "model" the new force in their own way.

All soldiers were henceforth to be paid by Parliament at a definite fixed rate of wage.[1] The old system of local subscriptions was done away with, and the money to be raised by taxation and loan from the country as a whole. The soldiers were thus guaranteed at least a subsistence while the war lasted; and being placed under the direct control of Parliament, became the servants, not of any mere local authority, but of the State.

The first need was money, and as a nucleus the city lent £80,000. The second was to establish a system of strict discipline. This, Sir Thomas Fairfax, now Commander-in-Chief, a man of sterling character, and a careful, methodical soldier, carried out with tact and vigour. Fairfax has hardly been treated fairly by posterity. It is true that he was not a genius, nor had he Cromwell's overwhelming personal force; but he was a determined fighter, a good organiser, and an indefatigable worker. Moreover, he was thoroughly patriotic according to his lights, and a man of blameless life.

Under the hand of Fairfax the "new model" army grew apace. The work lay with him and Skippon; Cromwell was in the South-west serving with Sir William Waller. In April Waller resigned his commission, and Cromwell, released from his duties there, was placed in independent command for a short time to harass the Royalists in the Midlands.

He, also, resigned his commission in due course, but

[1] Foot soldiers received eightpence a day, cavalry soldiers two shillings a day (out of which they had to feed their horses).

was told that he could not be spared—a fact patent enough to all. Neither Cromwell nor Fairfax, however, could accomplish much for the present. Parliament having determined to correct the mistake of blindly allowing incompetent generals to work their own sweet will with the armies they commanded, now committed the scarcely less fatal blunder of placing the whole conduct of the war in the hands of a Committee of their own members, and tying the hands of the men who, alone, knew what to do. As a consequence, the fate of the Puritan cause still hung in the balance, and had Charles known how to secure the right men to lead his army, or how to treat them when they came in his way, he might even yet have overpowered his enemies and regained his throne.

The chief mistake made by the "Derby House Committee" entrusted with the conduct of the war for the Parliament, was to insist that Fairfax should make an end of Royalist strongholds, instead of allowing him to seek for the army of the king in the field, and crushing it as Rupert had been crushed at Marston Moor. The task of meeting the king was left vaguely to the Scots in the North. Fairfax did what he was told to do, and by the 10th of May had taken Taunton and invested Oxford. In the meantime the king had left that city, and was planning combinations at his leisure with Rupert. Further, the Scots refused positively to seek for him. Montrose in the Highlands was in the full tide of his successes, and the Scottish forces were needed nearer home. The most they would promise was to intercept the Royal army should it march northwards to attempt a junction with Montrose.

This reply frightened the Parliament, and pressure was brought to bear upon the Committee to give Fairfax

a free hand. But good news came from the West, where Goring was outmanœuvred in his attempt to send an army to join Charles, so the Committee bided their time, and still held Fairfax at Oxford. Then came news more serious than they had received yet. Rupert had gathered a formidable army for Charles, and was said to be advancing on the Eastern Counties. Cromwell was despatched at once to Ely, and London began to quake. Meanwhile, Charles, who had marched across Staffordshire, attacked and occupied Leicester, then an important Parliamentary position, and plundered the town to the bone. "One hundred and fifty carts laden with spoil," say the chronicles of the time, "rolled off to Newark."

The disaster roused Parliament into a full appreciation of the blundering policy of the Committee. On June 2nd Fairfax was directed to take the field. Six days later he had discovered the whereabouts of the king, and called a council of war to decide what was to be done. The council made up its mind speedily enough, and "declared for the simple plan of seeking out the enemy, and fighting him wherever found."[1]

This decision showed that the spirit Cromwell had prayed for so long in the army was at last dominant there. One thing only remained to complete the equipment of the "new model" for its last great struggle with "malignancy," and enable it to meet the Royal army, commanded by Charles and Rupert, on equal ground; this was the long-deferred appointment of a Lieutenant-General. Every man in the council of officers felt this need, and a petition signed by all acquainted the Parliament that the army had chosen Cromwell for the post. The bearer of the petition to London,

[1] Gardiner, Civil War, vol. ii. p. 237.

Colonel Hammond, found no difficulties in his way. The Derby House Committee had ceased to rule. Parliament left Fairfax to do what he would, subject only to taking counsel with his own officers.

Cromwell meanwhile had been as usual working with all his might at the task set him to do. Arriving at Ely on May 26th, he found affairs there in a state of confusion and panic. In two weeks he had put the place in a state of defence and raised 3000 foot and 1000 horse for Fairfax's army. In the midst of these preparations he heard that Fairfax was pressing hard upon the king, and that a battle was imminent. He left Ely immediately, with a picked regiment of 600 horse, and on the 13th of June the army, hourly expecting to advance upon the enemy, saw to their unbounded satisfaction and relief the familiar figure of "Old Ironside" riding to the General's quarters, and thereupon gave him "a mighty shout" of welcome.

The Parliament forces now numbered 13,600 men, the Royalists only 7000. Yet the disparity of numbers was largely discounted by the superiority of the Cavaliers, who were mostly seasoned men, while the Parliament troops, though their ranks were stiffened by some regiments of veterans, were recruits who had joined after the constitution of the "new model." The real strength of the Parliamentary army lay not in its numbers, but in its discipline and the skill and resolution of its commanders.

The day after Cromwell joined the ranks the king gave Fairfax battle within a mile and a half of Naseby village. Naseby fight was one of the bloodiest and most decisive engagements of the war. In some of its main features it resembled Marston Moor, but in results it was

infinitely more far-reaching, and it established once for all the superiority of the Parliamentary generals over their opponents.

As at Marston Moor, Rupert commanded the cavalry on the one side, Cromwell on the other, though they did not again meet in person. Once more, while Cromwell on the Parliament left crushed at a blow Sir Marmaduke Langdale, who opposed him with the Yorkshire horse and "Newarkers," Rupert on the other wing swept away Ireton and his regiments, and chased them to the baggage-waggons in the rear. Again the Royalist infantry proved themselves the stronger men, broke the Parliament first line with the fury of their onset, and, had they been supported by a flank charge of heavy cavalry, might also have burst through the second line and reserves and won the day. But again Rupert lost control of himself and his men, and at the critical moment was far away; while Cromwell, arresting his troopers as soon as their charge had been successful, faced about, and with a well-ordered line rode down relentlessly the rear of the Royalist infantry, whose flank the rout of Langdale's horse had laid bare; while the second line of Parliamentary foot, though severely pressed, held their ground like bulldogs, until Cromwell's attack relieved the pressure on their ranks and enabled them again to take the offensive. From that moment the battle was practically decided. There had been an instant when the reserve of the Royalist foot, commanded by Charles in person, showed a disposition to intercept Cromwell and die man by man as Lindsey's guards had died before the Standard at Edgehill. Had they done so, and Rupert returned in time, the day might even yet have been retrieved. But they needed one to lead them, and though Charles

spurred gallantly to the front to do his duty as a soldier and a king, a member of his Staff seized his bridle and remonstrated; he hesitated, and weakly yielding to the entreaties of his body-guard, turned and fled, and thereby sealed his army's fate. With Cromwell in the rear, and the stubborn Roundhead infantry in front, and Rupert nowhere to be found, the Royalist infantry of the centre felt resistance to be hopeless, and laid down their arms by regiments. And when Rupert at length rode over the hill he too saw that all was over, and wheeled and followed the king. But his men were not to escape. The Parliament cavalry, still comparatively fresh, were instantly let loose in pursuit by Cromwell, and for fourteen miles, up to Leicester gates, they slaughtered Rupert's fleeing horsemen without mercy.

The defeat of the Royalists was complete and irreparable. The infantry were killed or captured to a man. Four thousand prisoners were taken, among them five hundred officers; and of munitions, a train of artillery, forty barrels of gunpowder, and arms for 8000 men passed into the hands of the Parliament. There was yet a further prize—the greatest of all from a political point of view—the king's cabinet, taken with copies of his private letters to the queen, and her replies.

This correspondence showed that Charles was almost without moral scruple where it was a question of regaining his crown. He had tried to enlist foreign aid of the most disreputable kind, though this would have caused untold suffering upon his people; he had been negotiating for the landing of an army of Papists from Ireland; and, while playing with Presbyterians on the one hand, he was promising all Roman Catholics that he would

abolish the laws against them if they aided him to return to power.

Such a discovery as this was more fatal to Charles's hold upon his people than any defeat in the field could have been. The question began to be asked, even by Royalists, what kind of man was this for whom they had sacrificed their lives and fortunes? No true Englishman, they said, could contemplate the devastation of his country by foreign mercenaries. No honest man could promise "on the word of a king" that which he knew he could not perform.

"The key of the king's cabinet," one wrote, "as it hath unlocked the mystery of former treaties, so I hope it will lock up our minds from thought of future."

But for us the most striking result of Naseby victory is the encouragement it gave Cromwell to burst forth into an appeal to Parliament to do justice to the men he led—though many had never taken the Covenant and never would, and not a few were "sectaries," and what the Presbyterians' clergy called "blasphemers of religion." This question of tolerance was ever in his thoughts, the object perhaps dearest to his heart in all that he fought and strove for. He never ceased to urge its importance when he had an opportunity, and the day after a great victory he always thought to be a remarkably good one.

"Sir,"[1] he writes to the Speaker, after a very brief account of the battle, "this is none other but the hand of God; and to Him alone belongs the glory, wherein none are to share with Him. The General served you with all faithfulness and honour, and the best commendation I can give him is that I dare say he attributes all to

[1] Carlyle, Part ii., Letter xxix. p. 176.

God, and would rather perish than assume to himself. Which is an honest and a thriving way;—and yet as much for bravery may be given to him, in this action as to any man. Honest men served you faithfully in this action. Sir, they are trusty: I beseech you, in the name of God, not to discourage them. I wish this action may beget thankfulness and humility in all who are concerned in it. He that ventures his life for the liberty of his country, I wish he trust God for the liberty of his conscience, and you for the liberty he fights for. In this he rests, who is, your most humble servant,

"Oliver Cromwell."

CHAPTER XIII

Though Naseby was the last battle fought in the open field, the Parliament army had a long and weary task to perform before England would be at peace.

There were important garrison towns in Royalist hands, such as Newark and Bristol; fortresses such as Basing House and Raglan, which had hitherto proved impregnable to any assault. Besides this, Fairfax, as he swept westward, found that the country people were in the tumultuous angry condition of a hive of disturbed bees.

As an armed force these peasants were not formidable, but they made great havoc with the supplies; and as the question of pacification of the country was now taking the place of conquering an enemy, the right way of dealing with them became a real difficulty.

These "Club-men," as they were called from the rudeness of their arms, had an undoubted grievance. In many localities they had been goaded to desperation by the plundering fraternity of both armies, and had banded themselves together to protect their families and property, but in other places there was evidence that Royalist agitators were behind the movement.

In Dorsetshire such serious damage was done to the commissariat of the Parliament army that at length Fairfax despatched Cromwell to put down the agitation with a strong hand. The way in which the order was carried out was extremely characteristic. It may be

remarked in passing, as a contrast between the ideas of the Puritans and Cavaliers, that where the Royalist commanders met the Club-men, they had no more consideration for their wrongs than the Rhodesian police with marauding Matabele.

Cromwell going forth at the head of "a party of horse" met these Club-men first near Shaftesbury. The peasants, organised apparently by some gentry in the neighbourhood, were assembled "upon the top of a high Hill, full of wood and inaccessible." Upon receiving this intelligence Cromwell sent a lieutenant with a few men to ask what they were doing, and to inform them that he was there in person and ready to confer with their leaders. A man—"one Mr. Newman," as Cromwell calls him—thereupon came down from the hill, and stated that a few days ago Fairfax had taken prisoner certain of their leaders, and that an explanation was required of this action. Cromwell replied that he did not hold himself bound to give any explanation, but that any men so taken were accused of stirring up "many tumultuous and unlawful meetings," and were to be tried by law for the offence. Then followed the characteristic touch. When Mr. Newman asked permission to return to his men, Cromwell, offering to go with him, and accompanied only by "a small party," went to the top of the hill and delivered the message himself. He also took occasion to address the peasants, telling them that justice should be meted out to any person who molested them or their property; but giving them warning that meetings of bodies of men such as theirs could not be allowed, ending his speech with an earnest recommendation to them all to return to their homes, and a definite assurance that their leaders would only be tried for "things they were accused of, which

they had done contrary to law, and the peace of the Kingdom."

These assurances, with, probably, the confidence he showed in his hearers' good sense, enabled Cromwell to gain his point. The men "seemed to be well satisfied, promised to return to their houses; and accordingly did so."

But this was not always to happen. Further on, near Shrawton, four thousand more Club-men were collected in a very belligerent mood. Cromwell describes what happened in a letter to Fairfax; and his account, being as usual strictly accurate, may fitly be quoted here:—

[1] "I sent a forlorn-hope (advance guard) of about fifty Horse," he writes, "who coming very civilly to them, they fired upon them; and ours desiring some of them to come to me, were refused with disdain. They were drawn into one of the old Camps, upon a very high Hill; I sent one Mr. Lee to them, To certify the peaceableness of my intentions, and To desire them to peaceableness, and to submit to the Parliament. They refused and fired at us. I sent him a second time, To let them know, that if they would lay down their arms, no wrong should be done them. They still (through the animation of their leaders, and especially two vile Ministers) refused; I commanded your Captain-Lieutenant to draw up to them, to be in readiness to charge; and if upon his falling on, they would lay down arms, to accept them and spare them. When we came near, they refused his offer, and let fly at him; killed about two of his men, and at least four horses. The passage not being far above three abreast, kept us out: whereupon Major Desborow wheeled about;

[1] Carlyle, Part ii., Letter xxx. p. 180.

got in the rear of them, beat them from the work, and did some small execution upon them;—I believe killed not twelve of them, but cut very many. We have taken about 300; many of which are poor silly creatures, whom if you please to let me send home, they promise to be very dutiful for time to come, and 'will be hanged before they come out again.'

"The ringleaders which we have I intend to bring to you. They had taken divers of the Parliament soldiers prisoners, besides Colonel Fiennes his men; and used them most barbarously; bragging, They hoped to see my Lord Hopton, and that he is to command them. They expected from Wilts great store; and gave out they meant to raise the siege at Sherbourne, when they were all met. We have gotten great store of their arms, and they carried few or none home. We quarter about ten miles off, and purpose to draw our quarters near to you to-morrow."

This work, "though unhappy" as the Chroniclers termed it, had certainly to be done, and was done well.

Following the dispersal of the Club-men in August 1645 there came a long succession of sieges of Royalist strongholds, which were reduced one by one, though not without fierce fighting, of which Cromwell bore the brunt.

All through September and October he was working almost night and day. Winchester fell on the 28th September; Basing House—the grim old fortress which had with ease stood out against all previous attacks, and was called "basting-house" by the Cavaliers in consequence—was taken on October 13th; Langford House, near Salisbury, five days later. These duties accomplished, Cromwell turned westward and rejoined Fairfax in Cornwall.

But while Cromwell's immediate energies were fully

employed in destroying with fire and sword the last fabric of defence possessed by Charles in the South, his mind was already busy with the future and the "settlement" of differences; differences not between Cavalier and Puritan —at present the "malignant" was hardly within the pale of the law—but between Presbyterians and Independents; between the upholders of a uniform system of religious worship and the men, a small body as yet, but a growing one, who, having spent their blood for freedom of religious worship and the destruction of the tyranny of Episcopacy, were not going to allow a religious yoke worse even than Laud's to be planted about the neck of Englishmen. As evidence of Cromwell's deep anxiety and conviction on this point may be quoted a portion of a letter penned by him in September to the Speaker of the House of Commons, written after the siege of Bristol, when Rupert, who was in command there, received his last and bitterest defeat at the hands of the men he had at one time treated with so much contempt.

"It has pleased the General," Cromwell began, "to give me in charge to represent unto you a particular account of the taking of Bristol; the which I gladly undertake." He gives the "account" and then writes something more, something which he probably "undertook" entirely on his own responsibility; something, which as an index to his beliefs and thoughts at the time is of great value, though Parliament, probably extremely scandalised at their "humble servant's" free and unorthodox speech, carefully struck it out before allowing the letter to be printed.

[1] "Thus I have given you a true, but not a full account of this great business; wherein he that runs may

[1] Carlyle, Part ii., Letter xxxi. pp. 182–7.

read, That all this is none other than the work of God. He must be a very Atheist that doth not acknowledge it.

"It may be thought that some praises are due to those gallant men, of whose valour so much mention is made—their humble suit to you and all that have an interest in this blessing, is, That in the remembrance of God's praises they be forgotten. It's their joy that they are instruments of God's glory, and their country's good. It's their honour that God vouchsafes to use them. Sir, they that have been employed in this service know, that faith and prayer obtained this City for you; I do not say ours only, but of the people of God with you and all England over, who have wrestled with God for a blessing in this very thing. Our desires are, that God may be glorified by the same spirit of faith by which we ask all our sufficiency and have received it. It is meet that He have all the praise. Presbyterians, Independents, all have here the same spirit of faith and prayer; the same presence and answer; they agree here, have no names of difference; pity it is it should be otherwise anywhere! All that believe have the real unity, which is most glorious; because inward, and spiritual, in the Body, and to the Head. For being united in forms, commonly called Uniformity, every Christian will for peace-sake study and do, as far as conscience will permit. And for brethren, in things of the mind we look for no compulsion, but that of light and reason. In other things, God hath put the sword in the Parliament's hand—for the terror of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well. If any plead exemption from that — he knows not the Gospel; if any would wring that out of your hands, or steal it from you under what pretence soever, I hope they shall do it without effect. That God may maintain

it in your hands, and direct you in the use thereof, is the prayer of,

"Your humble servant——"

The winter of 1645–6 was spent by Cromwell in Cornwall, Devon, and Somersetshire, and by March the power of the king had ceased to exist in those counties. In the North things had gone from bad to worse for Charles before the autumn ended. Montrose, who had held Scotland for a time at his mercy, was defeated by David Leslie at Philiphaugh, near Selkirk; and Charles himself, from the walls of Chester, saw the last remnant of his English army crushed at Rowton Heath. The last engagement of the war was with Sir Jacob Astley, who was marching with 3000 men to the relief of Oxford, whither the king had retreated, and was attacked and beaten at Stow on March 22nd.

"You have now done your work," the veteran is reported to have said to his captors, "and may go play, unless you fall out among yourselves."

An utterance which was prophetic enough. The "falling out" was beginning.

As the military situation became less critical, the political temperature rose; and Charles, though beaten from the field, and in April leaving Oxford in disguise to take refuge with the Scottish army, presently found himself a centre of intrigue.

All winter long there had been plots and counter-plots. The Scots, despairing of any satisfactory settlement of the English nation on a Presbyterian basis so long as such men as Cromwell and Vane held influence in the army and in Parliament, began to look towards some profitable accommodation with the king, now that he

was sufficiently humbled by defeat to listen to their proposals; while the English Presbyterians were only deterred from joining their Scottish co-religionists through a distrust of Charles, which had become particularly acute since the exposure of his correspondence with the queen. Had either of these parties really known the king, they would have spared themselves much trouble and anxiety, and his Majesty a great deal of tribulation and hardship.

Charles was, as far as he understood the meaning of the word, a staunchly religious man, and a devoted believer in the creed of the Episcopal Church. Episcopalians may well revere his name. Had he renounced his faith at this time, he might have regained his crown almost on his own terms. The Scottish nation would have died for him to a man, and a very important party in England joined hands with them. But on this point Charles never wavered. "I would sooner lose my crown than my soul," he said, when the matter was pressed upon his consideration. Yet, for all this, he listened with apparent favour to the overtures of the Scottish Commissioners. This was highly characteristic. It never occurred to Charles that there was anything dishonourable in appearing to countenance proposals which he had not the faintest intention of really entertaining. He did so in this instance because he honestly believed that other considerations would in time induce the Scots to waive such an impossible condition as the Covenant. He knew as little of the men with whom he had to deal as they of him. Charles's real thoughts upon this question of his religious faith, and the consequences which he believed likely to follow from his loyalty to it, are expressed in a letter to Rupert two months after Naseby:—

"As a Christian I must tell you that God will not suffer rebels and traitors to prosper;—and whatever personal punishment it shall please Him to inflict upon me, must not make me repine, much less give over this quarrel; and there is as little question that a composition with them at this time is nothing else but a submission, which by the grace of God I am resolved against, whatever it cost me; for I know my obligation to be both in conscience and honour, neither to abandon God's cause, injure my successors, nor forsake my friends. Indeed I cannot flatter myself with expectation of good success more than this, to end my days with honour and a good conscience; which obliges me to continue my endeavours as not despairing that God may yet in due time avenge His own cause—though I must aver to all my friends that he that will stay with me at this time, must expect and resolve either to die for a good cause or—which is worse—to live as miserable in maintaining it as the violence of insulting rebels can make him."

A curious parallel to these self-communings of the defeated, disheartened king are the strenuous efforts and patient but persistent pleadings of Cromwell with the leading men of his own party to set aside differences of religious belief; to extend as complete a toleration as the civil law would allow toward the most violent of "sectaries"; and by combining in brotherly unity the best element of the Puritan party, set about binding up the wounds of a bleeding and exhausted nation. He exposed himself to the bitterest obloquy and misunderstanding by such action. Brave and honest as the "sectaries" for whom he pleaded undoubtedly were, they had serious faults, and in after days Cromwell suffered from their fanaticism and ignorance more than

any one else. But while he saw these weaknesses, he felt that the worst mistake the authorities of Parliament could commit was a policy of hard, unsympathetic repression, and a persecution of men with "tender consciences." Therefore, though he received the bitterest personal attacks in orthodox quarters, he resolutely pressed his point. The very knowledge he possessed of the faults of his soldiers made him peculiarly anxious that the better men among them—a large majority—should have fair-play and generous treatment from Parliament. He knew—what the Parliament was soon to find out to its cost — that the soldiers were becoming of necessity ardent politicians. He had moved among them as a friend as well as a commander. He knew their beliefs, and the strange "spirit of democracy," as Dr. Gardiner aptly terms it, which was taking root in the minds of the leading spirits in the regiments. Equally well was he aware, to quote the same great authority, that the nation at large had no such ambition. He was therefore very anxious, as his letter after the taking of Bristol clearly shows, that Parliament, while granting liberty of conscience, should keep firm the control of affairs, the army among the rest.

"God hath put the sword in the Parliament's hands," he wrote from Bristol; "if any would wring that out of your hands, or steal it from you under what pretence soever, I hope they shall do it without effect."

Such was Cromwell's position. Standing firmly between the authority which at present held the power by law and the men who, were they goaded by injustice, might seize that authority by the sword, his allegiance was given to the Parliament, and to all reasonable lengths Parliament might count upon his support. But

let Honourable Members look to it that they were worthy of the obedience of honest men. They had deposed Charles for tyranny and injustice, and the divine right of kings to misgovern would never again be recognised in England. It now remained to be seen whether these men upon whom the mantle of government had fallen would profit by the lesson they themselves had taught. If not, there were those still in the land who believed that freedom and right were greater things than a corrupt Government—even though it called itself the "free Parliament of England"—and those men held the sword.

CHAPTER XIV

THE first Civil War ended with the surrender of Oxford on the 28th of June 1646. Five days before had taken place the first marriage in Cromwell's family, that of his eldest daughter Bridget. Her husband was Henry Ireton, at this time Commissary-General to Fairfax, and the most devoted of all Cromwell's supporters. Indeed, it is said that the young man's admiration for the father was partly the reason why he desired a union with the daughter, who was fourteen years his junior. Be this as it may, Miss Bridget Cromwell had quite enough of her father's force of character and cleverness to make her a good match even for the ablest of the younger Commonwealth men.

Ireton was a man of education. He graduated at Trinity College, Oxford, and studied law with a view of going to the bar; but at the first outbreak of the war he took up arms, and early fell under the notice of Cromwell, who thought so highly of his abilities that it is said Fairfax appointed him Commissary-General at Cromwell's particular request. At the siege of Oxford he was made one of the Commissioners to draw up the treaty of surrender. Later in the year he joined his father-in-law in Parliament, sitting for Appleby. From this time onward he became a power in the political world, a position he owed to his own abilities, Cromwell simply helping him to procure the opportunity to display them.

In the same year, 1646, Cromwell's second daughter, Elizabeth (Betty), also left the home-nest. She married one John Claypole, as great a contrast to Henry Ireton as could well be. Claypole was the son of a country gentleman, an amiable person, but totally lacking in intellectual power or force of character. As far as we know, he took no part in any of the stirring events of the time, then or afterwards. It should be recorded of Claypole, however, that after his father-in-law's death he provided a home for Mrs. Cromwell—a brave and chivalrous act, when we consider that before two years had passed "the Lady Protectoress" had become the relict of the "bloody Regicide."

These last months of 1646 were a comparatively restful period of Cromwell's life. In this year he moved to London, which was to be his home henceforth, taking a house in the then fashionable neighbourhood of Drury Lane. The days of hardship and constant physical strain were over for the time, yet he could have taken little rest mentally. He had resumed his duties as a diligent member of Parliament, and was in regular attendance at the debates of the House, which soon began to give him the keenest anxiety.

For a time indeed the Independent party in the Commons seemed to have things all their own way. The Scots, believing that Charles, who was now practically their prisoner, would take the Covenant, ceased to make overtures to the English Presbyterians, and showed signs of rallying round the king. This danger, together with the presence of the Scottish army in the North of England, caused all Englishmen, Presbyterians as well as Independents, to support the party which numbered Cromwell among its leaders, and which was resolutely

opposed to any peace with Charles short of his unconditional surrender. At the end of the year, however, the negotiations between Charles and the Scots broke down, and the latter resumed friendly relations with their English allies, on the basis of their common religion. This turned the balance of votes in the Commons against the Independents, and suggestions were made to disband the army.

We may pause at this point to say a word for the Scotch, who have borne much unmerited obloquy, because, after many professions of loyalty to the king's person, they gave him up to his enemies, as was supposed, upon payment of £200,000.

It has been called an "Act of Judas." As a matter of fact, Charles being obdurate on the point of religion, it was the only reasonable course left for the Scots to take. From the first the Scottish Commissioners made it clear to Charles that the support of their nation depended solely upon his Majesty taking the Covenant. They never professed to place the Crown before the Covenant. Such deception as there was, was on Charles's own side. His principles being what they were, he had no business to have listened to the Commissioners. In truth, each party entirely miscalculated the depth of the other's religious convictions. Each believed the other would yield when it came to the point. Both were mistaken, and this being so, nothing remained to the Scots but to leave Charles to his fate. Of course they might have aided him to escape to France instead of giving him up to the English, but why should they make deadly enemies of their former allies in England for his sake? He had done nothing for them at any time to deserve such consideration. The English Parliament had fought

long and desperately to win freedom from the tyranny which the Stuarts had imposed upon them; why should the Scots rob them of the fruits of their victory by enabling Charles to go abroad, and possibly raise an army of invasion from Catholic countries, and crush out such Presbyterians as still remained true to their faith? As to the bribe of £200,000; this was the payment of a just debt, the price, or part of the price, for the past services of the Scottish army to the English Parliament.

These arrangements were made in January 1646–7, and by the 11th of February the king was in the hands of the Parliament, at Holmby House, and not a Scottish soldier remained upon English ground.

The political parties at Westminster now underwent an important change. All armed resistance to Parliament was at an end, the king was a prisoner, and the work of the army seemed over. This was as it should be in theory. Unfortunately, Parliament as it was then constituted represented the worst instead of the best elements of the Puritan reaction against Episcopacy; and unless some force outside Westminster were able to make itself felt and heard in the land, England would soon be groaning under a rule almost as corrupt and a great deal sterner than that of Laud and Charles.

In vain had the Independents tried to modify the enactments which had been passed to enforce the Covenant, enactments which pressed with particular severity upon the rank and file of the army. They were defeated in every division, and were at last reduced to impotence.

What remained to be done? To Cromwell the situation seemed almost beyond remedy. It has been supposed that all this time, the spring of 1647, he began an

active intrigue to promote disaffection in the army, and that he was the prime mover, though secretly, of the agitation that followed. This, however, a close study of events has proved to be untrue. At this time, and long afterwards, Cromwell shrank from any assumption of political force on the part of the soldiers. He had pleaded their claim to citizenship and tolerance in religion, passionately and persistently; he had tried to rouse his colleagues in the House to the injustice and stupidity of simply repressing all men alike for not seeing eye to eye with them in matters of religious worship; but he went no further. When petitions came in from various counties begging for disbandment of the soldiers on account of the oppressive taxation necessary to keep them together, he raised not a word of protest.

Indeed, the army itself had no such rooted objection to being dispersed as has been supposed. Nor did the agitation, which was soon to reach so dangerous a height, begin from religious scruples against the Covenant. It had a far more mundane origin, namely, arrears of pay! Had Parliament at this time made a determined effort and paid what they owed to their soldiers, it is almost certain that the army as a whole would have given no further trouble.

In point of fact, in all that followed we find that Parliament, or the Presbyterians in it, were the real aggressors. They proposed not only to save the taxpayers by disbanding the army forthwith, but to do this without entering into any guarantee concerning the debt owed by them to the soldiers, and which is said to have amounted to £331,000, the infantry having been eighteen weeks without pay, the cavalry as much as forty-three weeks. To prevent these disbanded and probably discontented men from proving troublesome they pro-

posed to urge them to volunteer for service in Ireland, where an army was sorely needed. And this was not all. The Presbyterians in Parliament now felt themselves strong enough to pay off old scores. Cromwell's outspoken heresies on the question of religion had never been forgiven or forgotten; and on March 8, 1647, it was formally resolved, without a division, that all officers above the rank of colonel, with the exception of Fairfax, should be desired to resign their commissions, and that the command of the army in Ireland should be given to well-known Presbyterians—Skippon and Massey. Closely following these measures came the most significant of all. It was carried by 136 votes to 108 that in future all officers must conform to the Church established by Parliament.

This was the last straw to Cromwell.

[1] "It is a miserable thing," he said to Ludlow after this debate, "to serve a Parliament to which let a man be never so faithful, if one pragmatical fellow amongst them rise and asperse him, he shall never wipe it out."

Yet neither in word nor in deed did he lend himself to any suggestion of rebellion against the Parliament which treated him so ill. Few men have lived who took less notice of personal affronts than Cromwell. The best evidence of his attitude at this time was in the fact that at the end of the month (March) he was seriously thinking of leaving England to serve under the Elector Palatine in Germany, where it seemed likely that the Calvinists were to be denied religious toleration.

"Cromwell might well have been prepared," says Gardiner, "if it proved true" (the oppression of the Calvinists) "to wield his victorious sword in the cause of

[1] Ludlow's Memoirs, ed. Firth, p. 145.

toleration in Germany, now that he was compelled to sheathe it in England."[1]

But this was not to be. While he was fighting in vain at Westminster, at Saffron Walden, where the army was now quartered, were men as convinced as himself that toleration in religion should be the watchword of a reformed government of England—men who were smarting under a keen sense of injustice, and looking to him to help them in their need.

On March 2nd a deputation from Parliament was sent down to the army to engage officers and men for Ireland. The Commissioners did not anticipate any difficulties. They had been in supreme authority too long to imagine that any one except the king would dare to dispute their decrees. Forty-three officers assembled in Saffron Walden church to meet the Commissioners, with Fairfax in the chair.

These officers were very civil, and promised to ask their men to volunteer for service in Ireland; but as far as they were concerned, they would not go until the following questions had been answered:—

(1) What regiments were to remain in England?

(2) Who was to command the army in Ireland?

(3) What guarantee was Parliament prepared to make for the payment of an Irish army?

(4) What was Parliament going to do "in point of arrears and indemnity for past services in England?"

The first two questions—the least important—some of the officers asked in hesitating tones. The last and really crucial ones they were united about, a sure test of where the shoe was pinching.

The Commissioners were greatly offended at the re-

[1] Gardiner, Civil War, vol. iii. p. 222.

ception of their proposals, and appealed to Fairfax to use his authority to enforce the withdrawal of the questions. He tried to smooth matters over, with the result that twenty-nine officers agreed to withdraw, the rest remaining obdurate.

This stand by the officers quickly made itself felt in the ranks. The men immediately drew up a petition to Parliament, drastic in character and pronounced in language. After some persuasion, however, they toned it down somewhat, and addressed it to Fairfax instead of to the House. In its amended form the petition was reasonable and moderate enough. It asked for indemnity for acts of war, for payment of arrears of wages, and for exemption from impressment in any future war. It prayed that pensions should be granted to widows and orphans of men killed in service, that soldiers who had suffered from their faithfulness to Parliament might be compensated, and lastly, that the soldiers both in England and Ireland should at once be given enough money to pay their current expenses. This final request showed the condition to which the soldiers were reduced. They had not the wherewithal even to buy food and clothing, and either had to find their own keep out of private resources, borrow from any who would lend, or—starve![1]

This petition of the soldiers was sent to the House by Fairfax; the Commissioners returned to Westminster to report the result of their mission. Everything now depended upon the spirit in which the members of Parliament, who owed their present position of authority entirely to these men, would reply to their request for fair treatment and consideration of grievances. A reasonably conciliatory answer and prompt attention to the pressing want of money justly due, and all would have

[1] Gardiner, Civil War, vol. iii. p. 226.

gone well. No man of influence had as yet cast in his lot with the soldiers. Fairfax had held them back as far as he was able. Cromwell, though sympathising with their wrongs as they well knew, even went so far as to deprecate the petition as being "an attempt to dictate to Parliament with arms in their hands."[1]

All that was needed on the part of honourable members was common sense and an honest desire to be just. Unfortunately for themselves these men were much more concerned about their sacred prerogative, and punctilios of form and ceremony, than with the good of the nation and the needs of their soldiers. The petition "provoked a storm of indignation" in the House, and was immediately suppressed, which implied a direct refusal by Parliament to consider it at all. Then the members, having heard vague reports that the obnoxious document was being signed wholesale by the men, and that a committee of officers was taking it in hand, and that one Colonel Pride had threatened to cashier the men of his regiment if they did not sign it, lost their heads and proceeded to treat the protesting soldiers as "rebels." They sent for four officers to the bar of the House to explain themselves, and some one even suggested that Cromwell should be arrested.

After a long debate, which waxed warmer and warmer, Holles, the bitterest enemy of the Independents, scribbled a "declaration" on his knee, which the House passed at once.

It was practically a declaration of war against the whole army; yet so heated were the Presbyterians, and so blind were they to the destruction they were surely bringing upon themselves, that it was issued as a manifesto by both Houses without a division.

After stigmatising the soldiers' protest as a "dangerous

[1] Gardiner, Civil War, vol. iii. p. 226.

petition tending to put the army into a distemper and mutiny," it went on to say that "all those who shall continue in their distempered condition and go on advancing and promoting that petition shall be looked upon, and proceeded against, as enemies to the State and disturbers of the public peace." [1]

Such words as these made it impossible for Cromwell to remain passive any longer. The time was close at hand when he must choose between two alternatives, and either lose the confidence and affection of the men he had led to victory, by whose side he had prayed, fasted, and fought, year after year, and who had never failed him yet; or turn upon the Parliament to which he had sworn allegiance, and of which he was himself a member, and defy, and if necessary destroy, the very authority he had shed his blood to establish in power.

It was a terrible crisis, and Cromwell did not come to a decision concerning it without the deepest searching of heart. For the moment he said nothing, but awaited events and narrowly scanned the political horizon. Meanwhile the storm grew in fury and strength. In April the Parliament finding threats of no avail, again sent Commissioners to the army. These men were received by the officers with the same questions as before. When they refused to answer, they were asked in a louder tone what generals had been chosen for Ireland. It was then whispered among the officers that Skippon and Massey were named, upon which a significant cry came from one of them, Why were not their old generals chosen? a cry that was taken up amid shouts of "All! All! Fairfax and Cromwell and we all go." The Commissioners again retired baffled and empty-handed.

[1] Gardiner's Civil War, vol. iii. p. 229.

CHAPTER XV

THERE was one essential difference at this time between Cromwell and most of the other men about him, a difference which, though it gave him a power which others did not possess of seeing into the very heart of a crisis, caused him to be misunderstood on all sides. While they were thinking of their personal reputation or of the interests of their class, Cromwell's thoughts were occupied with the best means of finding a solution of the complications of public affairs, and anxiety for the safety of the State as a whole. It was this determination to discover, if he could, a sound and lasting "settlement," a *via media* between narrow Presbyterianism and the extreme form of democracy he saw developing in the army, which had made him hesitate so long to take his place as leader of the men whose welfare and highest aspirations were dearer to him than they ever knew.

That such an attitude should be misunderstood was inevitable. When men's passions are aroused, on the one side by unjust treatment, on the other by what they consider flagrant defiance with their rights as the supreme authority of the nation, the man who stands midway between and refuses to go the length of either, whatever may be his reputation or strength, is certain to be distrusted, hated, vilified on every hand. This was to be Cromwell's fate henceforth—a sad one, for he was a man who loved and appreciated the love of his friends; a very noble one, for to do his duty he deliberately faced loathing

and abuse of other men, and the infinite strain of mind of the man who stands alone. Not that we need become sentimental over it. He never pitied himself. Indeed he had a quiet contempt for those who were over-sensitive to the opinions of others. But he suffered acutely at times nevertheless. The popular verdict has always been that Cromwell was eaten up with personal ambition. This has been because so few have taken the trouble to examine his actions in relation to events.

It cannot but be obvious, for instance, that had Cromwell been afflicted with this complaint, he would have seized with avidity, instead of studiously avoiding, the opportunity of bringing the restless turbulent spirits in the army into collision with the purblind Parliamentarians. Fairfax was Commander-in-Chief, but Cromwell possessed, and knew that he possessed, both with officers and men, an influence that Fairfax could not approach.

The army, led and controlled by him, would have been a weapon that only needed wielding as Cromwell certainly could have wielded it, to place its master in a position to dictate what terms he pleased to Parliament, and hold the government of England in the hollow of his hand. No one can doubt that Cromwell had sufficient capacity for this had he chosen to use it. But he did not so choose. Such a thought never entered his head. Power of that kind had no attraction for him. Only the pressure of stern necessity caused him to commit acts which have given colour to the accusation that he was an emperor under a thin disguise. What this accusation is worth we shall see later on. At present we desire only to emphasise the fact that any time during March, April, and the first three weeks of May 1647 Cromwell,

by throwing himself into the arms of the army, could have secured the position dearest to the heart of an ambitious man; but that, so far from doing it, he remained passive and still, losing reputation every day; sorely disquieting his best friends, and winning for himself among the extreme section of the soldiers the name of a cold-hearted schemer, who, while risking nothing himself, was prepared when the fruit was ripe to reap the result of others' labour. John Lilburn, the Leveller, called him a "silken Independent," and went so far as to taunt him with the grant made him by Parliament, after Naseby, of £2500 per annum, as being the cause of this moderate attitude.

Meanwhile the friction between the army and the Parliament grew rapidly worse. The most that the Commissioners in Parliament could do, after the cry of the officers to be led by Fairfax and Cromwell to Ireland, was to enrol, by means of bribes and threats, a force of 2320 men. They required 12,480. In the meantime the soldiers, principally from lack of pay, were becoming dangerous. At the end of April, when the discouraged Commissioners returned to Westminster, 151 officers sent in a vindication of their action concerning the men's petition. But the Commons would not even allow it to be read. It was admitted, however, that something must be done to relieve the deadlock, and six weeks' pay was voted. Six weeks! when the infantry needed four months, and the cavalry ten months! Such paltering with a vital question roused the army to active steps on its own behalf. Deputies, called agitators, "alias agents,"[1] two from each regiment, sixteen in all, were chosen to draw up letters to Fairfax, Cromwell, and

[1] Gardiner, Civil War, vol. iii. p. 243.

Skippon, three of their number, Sexby, Allen, and Shephard, being despatched to London to convey the letters to the generals. The wording of these epistles was much to the point:—

"The sending of the army to Ireland," the writers declared, "was nothing else than a design to ruin and break this army in pieces—a mere cloak for some who have lately tasted of sovereignty"—who "seek to become masters and degenerate into tyrants. . . ."[1]

There is a ring of hard sharp steel about this phraseology. The members of Parliament stood on very dangerous ground when they roused such men as these. As yet they did not see it. The letters were read in the House, and the three agitators called to the bar. Can we not picture them to ourselves the grim, stalwart men in buff and steel? In demeanour they were respectful, but they surveyed their angry masters with the coolness of men who had been under fire of something harder than words, and rather enjoyed it than otherwise. In speech they were somewhat curt. When asked why they had written the letters, and what they meant, they replied that these letters were the work of the regiments, that the regiments should explain them. And that was all they would say. At last the House, finding they were not to be drawn, dismissed them, and they strode out, as they had entered, modest, yet unawed, an embodiment of taciturnity and determination.

Whether this glimpse of the men with whom they had to deal, or the plain language of the letters they delivered, began at last to enlighten the members, is not stated; but for the first time the debate on the subject took a reasonable turn, and Skippon, Ireton, Fleetwood,

[1] Gardiner, Civil War, vol. iii. p. 244.

and Cromwell were appointed Commissioners to approach the army afresh, and were given power to concede, if they thought fit, the chief claim of the men by granting an indemnity for unlawful acts committed during the war, immediate payment of a portion of arrears of pay, and ample security for the rest.

The position of Cromwell on such a Commission was not an easy one, and that he accepted the post may be taken as a sign of his keen desire for peace. He had as yet made no sign of supporting the agitation of the army, but his views as to the non-payment of the men and their grievances generally were well known. Yet in this instance he approached them as representative of Parliament, the Parliament in which his own arrest had been spoken of without reproof or protest.

Every word he said would be liable to misinterpretation. If he expressed sympathy with the soldiers, he would be accused in the House of treason; if he urged the army to submit, his friends and old comrades would count him as a base deserter to their cause.

The evidence that has come down to us shows how faithfully and firmly he went to work. His bitterest enemy[1] could find nothing worse to say than that he was heard to acknowledge to the soldiers that there had "lately been much cruelty and injustice in the Parliament" toward them. While to the officers he remarked—

[2] "Truly gentlemen, It will be very fit for you to have a very great care in the making the best use and improvement that you can both of the votes and of this that hath been last told you, and of the interest which all of you, or any of you, may have in your several

[1] One Major Huntingdon, at that time an officer in his regiment.
[2] Clarke Papers, i. 72.

respective regiments—namely, to work in them a good opinion of that authority that is over both us and them. If that authority falls to nothing, nothing can follow but confusion."

It was in the last sentence that Cromwell struck the key-note of his policy. A Parliament with its injustice to himself and others, and its bitter intolerance in religion, was bad enough, but the anarchy which an appeal to the sword would bring with it would be still worse. Therefore, though he spoke in no uncertain tone about the soldiers' grievances, it was in full belief that the Commons had seen their mistake, and would now yield to all reasonable demands. He was mistaken. The temporary nervousness caused by the determined attitude of the agitators was followed by a reaction of irritation, under the influence of which the Presbyterians took an irrevocable and fatal step. The men who held the power of the purse, the city merchants, were mostly in pronounced antagonism towards Independency. Upon their support the Presbyterians felt they might count, and trusting to this began to prepare for war to the knife against the army.

On May 4th both Houses passed an ordinance giving authority for the appointment of a new Militia Committee for London, a Committee composed of Presbyterians, who immediately set about remodelling the city train-bands, numbering 18,000 men, after their own fancy.

This action of the Houses is of vital importance, as it fixes upon them the responsibility of the first appeal to arms. The course taken by the soldiers after this was taken in self defence. Parliament, not the army, was the aggressor.

The army soon found out what was going on. News came that all Independents were being eliminated from the city forces; then that the Commons, without making

further allusion to the arrears of pay, had voted the appointment of a Commission[1] for the disbandment "of all such forces as shall not go to Ireland." Lastly, it was reported that the Lords had invited the king to leave Holmby House and take up his abode at Oatlands, a place not far from London. This rumour immediately awakened a strong suspicion in the minds of the soldiers that there was an intention on the part of their Lordships to place Charles on the throne without guarantees as to his future behaviour—except towards themselves.

The spirit of resistance which was rife in the army, and its attitude as regards disbandment, may be gathered from a circular sent round to "the severall Regiments" by the agitators.

[2] "Fellow-soldiers, if you do but stand and not accept of anything nor do anything without the consent of the whole army, you will do good to yourselves, your officers, and the whole Kingdom."

It was their answer to the doings of the New Militia Committee in London.

At this juncture Cromwell came forward as peace-maker for the last time. During a debate in the House on May 21st to consider the claims of the soldiers, he said that if the reasonable demands of the men were promptly met they would "without doubt disband" and "a great part of the army remit themselves entirely to be ordered by Parliament."

In response the House made an order that security should be given at once to the soldiers for the arrears of pay, and that upon the disbandment eight weeks' pay, instead of six, should be given in cash. This appeared a move in the right direction, but the effect of it was more

[1] Commons Journal, vol. 876. [2] Clarke Papers, vol. i. p. 87.

than stultified by the discovery by the Independents that the Presbyterian leaders were intriguing with the Scots, and by a confirmation of the rumour that Charles was to be removed from Holmby. Upon this came the intelligence on May 25th that the army was to be immediately disbanded, though no money had been raised.

In view of such a flagrant breach of faith the last ray of hope that peace was possible disappeared even from Cromwell's mind. The army was furious, and when the Parliament Commissioners arrived at head-quarters, they found the men utterly beyond control. In London Cromwell had been roused at last to active measures. The instant he heard of the intrigue of the Presbyterians to reinstate the king he discarded his conciliatory policy and threw in his lot with the army. A Parliament which could meditate a union of Royalists and Presbyterians to crush Independency, and with it destroy the freedom of religious thought, for which the sword had been drawn five years ago, was no longer a body worthy of respect or loyalty. The army had faults, and was full of dangerously combustible elements, but it was in the right, and Cromwell joined it unreservedly.

The turning-point of the army agitation had now arrived. Up to this time it had been a spontaneous movement, upheld and fostered by a body of intelligent men in a determined but somewhat disjointed manner. On the day Cromwell placed himself definitely upon its side it began to be a securely organised force, guided by a master hand.

Upon the 31st of May Cromwell held a meeting at his house, and one Cornet Joyce, whose name was soon to be known all over England, received authority and instructions from his Lieutenant-General to carry out a mission in the neighbourhood of Holmby House.

What that authority and instruction really amounted to is a disputed point. Joyce declared afterwards that he was definitely told by Cromwell to carry off the king. Cromwell denied this categorically. The truth probably was that while Cromwell told Joyce to prevent, by force if necessary, any attempt on the Presbyterians' part to remove Charles to Scotland or elsewhere, he intended, if no movement was made, that his Majesty should be left where he was. However this may have been, on the 1st of June 1647 Charles, to his surprise, but not to his displeasure, found himself in the hands of a regiment of Cromwell's troopers, heard that his former jailer had fled, and was curtly but respectfully informed that he was to be conveyed then and there to Newmarket under the wing of the army.

The first effect of the news upon the Parliament was to throw it into a panic. The Presbyterians were rudely awakened from their dream of authority, and for a short time realised their helplessness, and again passed orders for payment of arrears of pay. But it was only for two days. At the end of that time, Massey, the Presbyterian soldier, rode through the crowded streets of the city calling upon all to defend themselves against the army, who, he said, intended to kill the best men in London and Parliament.

War between the two parties was now formally declared, and the first thought of the Presbyterians was to seize upon Cromwell as likely to be the most dangerous enemy of all. It was a happy thought, but it came just a day too late. Cromwell was not to be found. Warned in time, he had betaken himself to the army, and was now in close consultation with Fairfax, deciding what step should be taken next.

CHAPTER XVI

Cromwell found that the first work that came to his hand when he reached the army was to enforce moderation upon the leading spirits there. He only arrived just in time. The agitators were carrying everything before them, and under their fiery appeals and condemnations the discipline of the army was breaking down. Not only did the men demand full payment of arrears of pay, but they now clamoured for the enforced resignation from Parliament of the most obnoxious of the Presbyterian leaders.

When Cromwell arrived they had just drafted "A Solemn Engagement of the Army," which all the officers as well as the men were to sign. He began by amending this, moderating its militant tone, and inserting or advising the insertion of clauses which must have rudely warned the extremists that with this man in their midst "liberty" as they called it, anarchy as we know it, was not to gain the upper hand if it was in his power to prevent it.

The first article of the "Engagement" provided a governing body for the army. It is an article of the first importance, and bears unmistakably the stamp of Cromwell's influence.

The affairs of the soldiers, it directed, were henceforth to be managed by a "Council of the Army," composed of "Those general officers who had sided with the soldiers," together with the non-commissioned officers and two

privates from each regiment. Nothing offered by Parliament was to be accepted by the army without the approval of this Council, and its authority, until the crisis had passed away, was to be absolute. The second article decreed that no persons were to be attacked by the army because they were Presbyterians; the third, that a "vindication" or denial was to be tendered to Parliament in reply to odious suggestions that had been made in certain quarters that the soldiers had designs "to the overthrow of magistracy, the suppression or hinderance of Presbytery, the establishment of Independent government, or the upholding of a general licentiousness in religion under pretence of liberty of conscience."

In this way did Cromwell strive to remove the impressions which the Presbyterians were doing their best to instil into the public mind—that the army was a body of dangerous innovators, ready at the least provocation to break up the laws of the land. But he had, nevertheless, something to say on the other side, and his second act after leaving London was to sign, and, it is believed, write with his own hand, a "remonstrance" to the City of London. Whether he did write this letter may be uncertain, but that the sentiments it expressed were Cromwell's, and put forth in his characteristic style, there can be no doubt whatever.

The Houses had struck at the army a deadly blow, the City had openly joined them. If peace were to be preserved it was necessary to warn the City Fathers in the plainest terms what they were bringing upon themselves by such madness.

Such was the gist of the letter. It is signed by thirteen officers; Fairfax first, Harrison last. The lowest rank of any of the signatories was that of colonel. A

letter worthy of the closest attention. Written in haste and as the thoughts came to the writer, it depicts in a way no carefully-worded state document could do the spirit of the men who signed it, and the "poor hungry soldiers" on whose behalf it was written.

"To the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, etc.—

"ROYSTON, 10*th June* 1647.

"RIGHT HONOURABLE AND WORTHY FRIENDS,[1]—Having, by our Letters and other Addresses presented by our General to the Honourable House of Commons, endeavoured to give satisfaction of the clearness of our just Demands; and, also, in Papers published by us, remonstrated the grounds of our proceedings in prosecution thereof: all of which being published in print, we are confident have come unto your hands, and received at least a charitable construction from you.

"The sum of all these our Desires as Soldiers is no other than this: Satisfaction to our undoubted Claims as Soldiers; and reparation upon those who have, to the utmost, improved all opportunities, and advantages, by false suggestions, misrepresentations and otherwise, for the destruction of this Army with a perpetual blot of ignominy upon it. Which we should not value, if it singly concerned our own particular (persons) being ready to deny ourselves in this, as we have done in other cases, for the Kingdom's good; but, under this pretence, we find, no less is involved than the overthrow of the Privileges both of Parliament and People; and rather than they (our enemies) shall fail in their designs, or we receive what in the eyes of all good men is (our) just

[1] Carlyle's Letters, Part iii. p. 228.

right, the Kingdom is endeavoured to be engaged in a new War.

. . . And this singly by those who . . . have no other way to protect *themselves* from questions and punishment, but by putting the Kingdom into blood, under the pretence of their honour of and their love to the Parliament. As if that were dearer to them than to us; or as if they had given greater proof of their faithfulness to it than we.

"But we perceive that under these veils and pretences, they seek to interest in their design the City of London; as if that City ought to make good their miscarriages, and should prefer a few self-seeking men before the welfare of the Public. And indeed we have found these men so active to accomplish their designs, and to have such apt instruments for their turn in that City, that we have cause to suspect they may engage many therein upon mistakes,—which are easily swallowed, in times of such prejudice against them, that have given (we may speak it without vanity) the most public testimony of their good affections to the Public, and to that City in particular.

"For the thing we insist upon as Englishmen—and surely, our being Soldiers hath not stript us of that interest, although our malicious enemies would have it so, —we desire a Settlement of the Peace of the Kingdom and of the Liberties of the Subject, according to the Votes and Declarations of Parliament, which *before* we took arms, were, by the Parliament, used as arguments and inducements to invite us and divers of our dear friends out; some of whom have lost their lives in this War. Which being now, by God's blessing, finished,—we think we have as much right to demand, and desire to see, a

happy Settlement, as we have to our money, and the other common interest of Soldiers which we have insisted upon. . . .

"We have said before, and profess it now, We desire no alteration of the Civil Government. As little do we desire to interrupt, or in the least to intermeddle with, the settling of the Presbyterial Government. Nor did we seek to open a way for licentious liberty, under pretence of obtaining ease for tender consciences. We profess, as ever in these things, When once the State has made a Settlement, we have nothing to say but to submit or suffer. Only we could wish that every good citizen, and every man who walks peaceably in a blameless conversation, and is beneficial to the Commonwealth, might have liberty and encouragement; this being according to the true policy of all States, and even to justice itself.

"These in brief are our Desires, and the things for which we stand; beyond which we shall not go. And for the obtaining of these things we are drawing near your City; professing sincerely from our hearts, we intend not evil towards you; declaring, with all confidence and assurance, That if you appear not against us in these our just desires, to assist that wicked Party which would embroil us and the Kingdom, neither we nor our Soldiers shall give you the least offence. We come not to do any act to prejudice the being of Parliaments, or to the hurt of this in order to the present Settlement of the Kingdom. We seek the good of all. And we shall wait here, or remove to a further distance to abide there, if once we be assured that a speedy Settlement of things is in hand, until it be accomplished. Which done, we shall be most ready, either all of us, or so many of the army as the Parliament shall think fit—to disband, or to go for Ireland.

"And although you may suppose that a rich City may seem an enticing bait to poor hungry Soldiers to venture far to gain the wealth thereof—yet, if not provoked by you, we do profess, Rather than any such evil should fall out, the Soldiers shall make their way through our blood to effect it. And we can say this for most of them, for your better assurance, That they so little value their pay, in comparison of higher concernments to a Public Good, that rather than they will be unrighted in the matter of their honesty and integrity (which hath suffered by the Men they aim at and desire justice upon) or want the settlement of the Kingdom's Peace, and their (own) and their fellow-subjects' Liberties,—they will lose all. . . .

"If after all this, you, or a considerable part of you, be seduced to take up arms in opposition to, or hindrance of, these our just undertakings,—we hope to have, by this brotherly premonition, to the sincerity of which we call God to witness, freed ourselves from all that ruin which may befall that great and populous City; having thereby washed our hands thereof.

"We rest,

"Your affectionate friends to serve you."

This letter was delivered to the Lord Mayor on the 11th of June. The day before it came Parliament was in a bellicose mood, and active steps were taken to establish an army in London to overawe the New Model.[1] But the warning of the officers cooled the warlike ardour of the Honourable Members, and still more that of the Aldermen. Commissioners were at once sent to Fairfax to procure particulars of the soldiers' demands, accompanied by a deputation of the citizens charged with fair words.

[1] Commons Journal, vol. 207.

But Fairfax would not listen to words, and the news flew back to London that the army had begun its march southwards. Then the drums beat in the city, the train-bands were called out, and tradesmen were told to close their shops. Only one regiment, however, appeared in any strength in response, while the tradesmen refused to put up their shutters until appealed to in person by the Lord Mayor. There was, however, no immediate danger of attack. A "scare" to secure reasonable terms was all that Fairfax and Cromwell intended to produce. The army encamped at St. Albans, and from thence sent in an elaborate statement of its recommendations for the proper government of the nation.

The agitation of the soldiers had passed far beyond the question of "grievances." It was now obvious to the army that this matter of arrears of pay was but a symptom of the unfitness of the present Parliament to govern, and that the first step to a satisfactory state of things must be its dissolution.

In the statement—entitled "The Declaration of the Army"—and drawn up, it is believed, by Ireton[1] after demanding that the Members of Parliament[2] who had been most active in their opposition to the army should be expelled from their seats, the House of Commons was asked to fix a date for the election of a new Parliament. It was further to guarantee fullest toleration in religion.

As might be expected, no Presbyterian would listen to these reforms unless compelled by force. The reply made by the Commons was a deeper plunge into intrigues with the king and the Scotch.

[1] Gardiner, "Civil War," vol. iii. p. 295.

[2] Holles, Stapleton, Lewis, Clotworthy, Waller, Maynard, Glyn, Long, Harley, Nicholls, and Massey.

The army, however, had already turned its thoughts in the direction of his Majesty, and Charles, captive as he was, without an army or the power of raising one, now became, to a certain extent, master of the situation. He was shrewd enough to see this; but he made the fatal mistake of overvaluing his opportunity and under-estimating the forces and the men with whom he had to deal. He failed to penetrate the motives of these stern Puritan soldiers. Their religious fervour was to him cant phrase or blasphemy. Their overtures he believed to be the selfish scheming of men whom he could buy—and sell. He looked upon the whole question as one of skilful card playing and shuffling, in which he held the trumps.

Cromwell and the officers who personally acted with him in the forthcoming negotiations with Charles did not understand his Majesty much better in some ways than he comprehended them. Knowing that in one respect—religion—they were able to offer him infinitely better terms than the Presbyterians, and as soldiers, counting upon his perception of the completeness of his defeat by arms, they shut their eyes to the point of view from which he viewed the rights and duties of a king. Perhaps they hardly knew what that was. To Charles his kingship was a gift of God. If he parted with a tittle of his prerogatives, except as a temporary expedient, he would commit high-treason against himself, his ancestors, and his posterity. "Constitutional Monarchy" as we know it to-day, would have been an unconceivable anachronism to him. In his opinion the people he governed had no right whatever to question his authority. And while, as a man of the world, and a very astute one, he was quite willing to listen to proposals, to make half-promises, give vague, non-committal assurances of good-will, behind

it all was a conviction of the sacredness of his person and his cause, which was unshakable. He was ready to palter and prevaricate interminably, to offer bribes, to smile and compliment the men he hated most; but to make a frank surrender of the unconstitutional powers on account of which the nation had cast him from the throne, and which no monarch in England was ever to wield again, that was an impossibility to Charles.

On the other hand there were reasons, and very weighty ones, why some accommodation might be arrived at, at least for a time, with the army leaders. The power of the sword was theirs, and after an exhausting civil war that power decides all claims. Even Charles would have to recognise this at last. Moreover, the leading spirits of the army, Cromwell and Ireton, felt that government by a monarchy with restricted but clearly defined powers was the only true solution of the present crisis of affairs.

If this could not be, they foresaw that either another war would come between the Independents and the Presbyterians, aided by the still smouldering elements of malignancy, or direct control of the State by the army. Either of these alternatives they believed would be disastrous. To avert them they were willing, after carefully safeguarding the nation from autocratic rule, to offer the king the most reasonable terms he could demand.

CHAPTER XVII

Until the publication of the Clarke Papers, edited by Mr. C. H. Firth, comparatively little was known of the real nature of the negotiations between the leaders of the army and the king. The memoirs of Sir John Berkeley gave much valuable information, but though honestly written, they are inevitably coloured by the writer's prejudice against all Puritans, and against Cromwell and Ireton in particular. It is only when we perceive the feelings and prejudice of the men about Cromwell, as these Papers have given us the power of doing, and note the forces with which he had to contend, that we begin to understand what the negotiations with Charles meant to Cromwell, or at what risk they were pursued.

From the first the matter rested mainly in Cromwell's and Ireton's hands. Fairfax was probably kept fully acquainted with all that passed, and at intervals the council of the army was consulted; but upon the shoulders of these two men lay the chief burden of bringing about an "accommodation" to relieve the present deadlock. The share each took in the work was characteristic. Ireton, a lawyer by training, of thoughtful and logical mind, drew up the scheme of National Government for Charles's acceptance—called "the Heads of the Proposals"—which, if he had agreed to it, would have made him the first constitutional monarch in England; while Cromwell personally directed the negotiations, held in check the impatient spirits in the

army, and bore with untiring patience Charles's constant subterfuges and lithe evasions. There were three main obstacles in the way.

One was Charles himself; another, the dislike of the "agitators" in the army to any terms with the man whom they considered personally responsible for all the bloodshed of the Civil War; the third, the chaotic state of government at Westminster, and the refusal of Parliament, in spite of all its promises, to give the soldiers adequate arrears of pay. The negotiations with Charles, in fact, were carried on by Cromwell in the midst of a veritable pandemonium of angry agitators, intriguing Parliament men, and abusive London citizens.

With Charles, Cromwell reasoned day after day, week after week. They met on the most amicable terms, and every token of respect and kindness that the king could receive were granted him freely. Parliament had forbidden his chaplains to come near him since his capture. Fairfax and Cromwell sent for and protected them. Charles had been deliberately separated from his children. The Generals had them conveyed to him, and the meeting between Charles and his forlorn little ones is said to have moved Cromwell to tears. This display of emotion, in view of Cromwell's implacable resolve eighteen months later that Charles must die, has been quoted as one of the worst exhibitions of hypocrisy on record. Nothing is more improbable. All accounts of this time, Royalist as well as Puritan, show that whatever Cromwell thought of Charles as a king, he respected and liked him as a man, which was probably one reason among others why, after every one else had given up the matter as impossible, Cromwell still hoped that some way of bridging over differences might be found.

There is no evidence, however, that Charles ever liked Cromwell, that he felt any gratitude for the kindness he received, or appreciated the concession made in "The Heads of the Proposals"—that full liberty of all religious worship would be granted to all Episcopalians. His mind, as has been said, was hopelessly astray; he imputed the worst motives to the officers, and paying scant attention to the "Proposals" themselves, bid for Cromwell's support by offers of titles and estates.

So matters stood between them for four months, Cromwell and Ireton pressing their propositions by every means in their power, aided loyally by Sir John Berkeley, the king's adviser, who saw that his master, having refused to accept Presbyterianism, could not reach the throne on any other terms. Several modifications, at his Majesty's suggestion, were made in the original "Proposals," and more than once so graciously did he receive the officers that it appeared as if he were really about to come to terms; but he never quite did so, and, at times, when he thought the Scots and Presbyterians were less inclined to insist on the Covenant, he received the army representatives with such haughtiness and reserve, that all except Cromwell lost patience and hope.

Meanwhile, with his own party Cromwell had scarcely less difficulty. From the beginning, any settlement at all with Charles was bitterly opposed by a large and influential section of the agitators. These men, who had been chosen by their comrades for their superior gifts of speech and pen, and their uncompromising zeal in advocating redress of grievances, were becoming democrats of an aggressive type. They had no respect whatever for the person of the king. They judged him as they would one of themselves, and naturally found him

wanting. Moreover, they did not see the necessity for the maintenance of a king. Their panacea for the maladies of the State was an immediate dissolution of the present Parliament, and the election of a new House of Commons by "Manhood Suffrage." The House of Lords and the function of kingship they would have dispensed with altogether. To such impracticable dreams Cromwell was utterly opposed. So too were Fairfax and the majority of the council of officers. But it was one thing to disapprove, another to keep in obeyance these audacious and turbulent spirits, who were gaining influence daily among the rank and file, and had no hesitation in expressing their opinions with the utmost frankness to their general himself. Cromwell's influence was taxed to the uttermost to hold them within bounds. Nothing was wanting to fan the flame of their wrath and distrust. Early in July there came the ugly rumour from the North of a projected invasion of Scotch malignants under the Duke of Hamilton, and, nearer home, the intelligence of a petition to Parliament of London apprentices for "suppression of conventicles, the restoration of the king, the maintenance of the Covenant, and the disbandment of the army."

This last piece of news was too much for the Army Council. They met on the 16th of July, and listened favourably to a proposal to march at once upon London and make short work of the apprentices and their petitions.

But Cromwell and Ireton, who were then hoping to induce Charles to agree to their proposals, and afterwards to gain the consent of Parliament, and who knew well that if the army were to enter London in its present mood bloodshed followed by military rule would be the

result, threw the whole of their strength into advocating moderation and patience. Cromwell, after arguing that Parliament had not yet shut the door upon amicable negotiations, gave vent to a warning which shows how severe the pressure afterwards must have been that induced him to draw the sword himself.[1]

"Really, really," he said, "have what you will have; that you have by force, I look upon it as nothing. I do not know that force is to be used except we cannot get what is for the good of the kingdom without. . . . I wish we may respite our determination" (to march on London) "till we see how things be. . . . The question is singly this: Whether or no we shall not in a positive way desire the answer to those things before we march toward London, when perhaps we may have the same things in the time that we can march. Here is the strictness of the question."

Cromwell's appeal was successful, and the event justified his advice; for Parliament again lost heart, and the eleven obnoxious members fled. The advantage for the army, however, was only temporary. All strength of purpose and grasp of authority seemed to have forsaken the wretched assemblage at Westminster which called itself a Parliament. On July 27 the apprentices, aided by other riotous persons, and backed by the barely concealed connivance of the city, invaded the precincts of Westminster, poured into the House itself, and hustled the members into votes of defiance against the army.

Such a disgraceful scene could not be allowed to occur again. Better the rule of the army than this mob law. Many of the moderate members of the House were of the same opinion, and even Cromwell did not now raise

[1] Clarke Papers, vol. i. p. 202.

any objection. The army, therefore, marched forthwith upon London. Some feeble preparations were made in parts of the city where the Presbyterian commanders, Poynter and Massey, who had no mercy to expect from the soldiers, did their best to rouse a spirit of resistance. But it came to nothing, and when the veterans of Naseby reached Temple Bar they found the city at their feet. The march into London took place on the 6th of August. The Lord Mayor and Aldermen and those members of Parliament who had not felt it safe to retire out of harm's way "welcomed" Fairfax and Cromwell, and after exchange of civilities the army tramped through the main thoroughfares of Westminster and the city, with laurel boughs in their helmets; Cromwell on horseback, leading the cavalry; Fairfax, who suffered from illness, in a coach.

This ended the whole matter. From that hour the government of the city, and practically that of the nation, passed into the hands of the Council of the Army, in which Cromwell had paramount influence. Parliament still sat at Westminster, and was to prove itself anything but tractable or accommodating; but the Council had its hand on the throat of the Commons, and when its patience wore thin let them know it.

There now remained the king. Here again it may be remarked that had Cromwell possessed that thirst for personal aggrandisement with which many people still credit him, he could have found a score of good and sufficient reasons for breaking off all treaty with Charles, and devoting his energies to making himself the man of the hour. On the 28th of July, nine days before the army took possession of London, Charles, to the dismay of his best friends, had negatived in definite terms all the principal points of the army's proposal, giving them to

understand that he considered himself in a position to dictate his own terms. This was the severest rebuff Cromwell and Ireton had received, while it raised to a corresponding height the anger of the wilder spirits in the army against such futile negotiations. But Cromwell was not beaten yet. The more he saw of the elements of which the army was composed, the more he dreaded its ascendency in the State. He hoped that the occupation of the city might open Charles's eyes to the power of the men he had flouted, the more so that the Parliament was proving hopeless. Instead of doing their best to heal sores and propitiate the army by voting the arrears of pay still due, the members of the House of Commons were much on their dignity again, and inclined even to intrigue direct with the king. Upon this Cromwell lost patience, and so frightened them by the display of a regiment of horse near Westminster, that the Presbyterian majority dwindled away, and by the 20th of August the Independents again held the balance of power in the Commons.

But these things made not the least impression on Charles.

He was disheartened by the easy victory of the army in London; but he knew that affairs were in a very disturbed state in Scotland; the queen was working hard for him in France, and even appealing to the Pope. Finally, he did not believe that these soldiers would work together very long. If he only waited patiently enough his day would come. He would not therefore yield to Cromwell's terms, were they ever so much modified in detail. He resolved to be a king, as he understood the word, or nothing.

History has rarely given us a stranger condition of

affairs. Cromwell, had he chosen to turn his back on Charles, would have had the army with him almost to a man, and in the whole of Great Britain and Ireland was no force that could maintain itself against this army. Yet Cromwell did no such thing. Though every day his friends were lessening in number, and his enemies increasing, and he did not now trust Charles, he laboured still to find some way of "accommodation."

His unpopularity troubled him very little. An officer once complained bitterly in his hearing at a number of scandalous libels that were being circulated about him.

"Shall we," Cromwell exclaimed, "upon his apprehension or any man's else . . . quarrel with every dog in the street that barks at us, and suffer the kingdom to be lost with such a fantastical thing!"

On another occasion he said, "Though it may be for the present a cloud may lie over our actions to those who are not acquainted with the ground of them, yet we doubt not but God will clear our integrity and innocence from any other ends we aim at but His glory and the public good."

In this faith, and with his conscience clear, he steadfastly pursued his course, while the storm raged furiously round him and calumny did its worst.

Cromwell may have been mistaken in what he tried and failed to do for Charles. But in the heart of such a man, risking life, honour, and reputation, to lead a deluded king into the way of righteousness and common sense, for the sake of his country's peace, there was a patriotism nobler and more disinterested than we find in any other public man of that time.

CHAPTER XVIII

It is not to be wondered at that no one understood Cromwell's position except those who knew him very intimately. Apart from his indifference to the abuse of his enemies and absolute refusal to trouble himself with any denial of the accusations freely launched at him alike by agitators and Presbyterians, his acts, as seen from the outside, were often contradictory. He deprecated force to the Army Council, yet he inclined to it himself when the Presbyterians would not listen to reason, telling Ludlow that "these fellows" would have to be "pulled out by the ears" if they were not more careful, and overawing them into obedience with a regiment of cavalry. He would speak bitterly of the want of faith of these Presbyterians, justifying his action against them on that ground; yet he still persevered in keeping a way open to negotiations with Charles, who had played a double game from the beginning.

Cromwell, in fact, was incomprehensible to all his contemporaries but Ireton, and for that reason made enemies, or at least detractors, of almost all of them. We can see, now, that he steadfastly held to what he believed to be the only way of preserving peace, namely, the creation of a government of a reformed king and Parliament. He failed, because the materials he had to work with were utterly unsuited to his purpose. But his aim is clear enough to us, and in pursuit of it he turned to Charles, to Parliament, or to the army with

encouragement, or the reverse, as the occasion demanded. That he destroyed his credit with all three parties in turn was because not one was really in favour of what he believed to be the only solution of the question. Nevertheless, at no time is Cromwell's genius for mastering men, with or without their good-will, more conspicuous than in the autumn of 1647, when he was outvoted in Parliament, held at arm's-length by Charles, and howled at as a time-server and a hypocrite by the public at large.

The very virulence of the abuse of which he was the victim testifies to the dread and anxiety with which his movements were watched. Fanatical republicans were even said to aim at his life, thinking probably that if Cromwell were once out of the way, the "freedom" of which they dreamed would not be very far off. He had to be extremely careful about his movements.[1]

The time came at length, however, when even Cromwell's patience with Charles was exhausted. On October the 11th Scottish Commissioners were reported to be in London seeking an audience with the king, and the rumours of preparations for an invasion of England were growing stronger every day. Cromwell began to feel a suspicion that Charles was throwing him over entirely in favour of the Scots. He turned, then, to the Presbyterians, and endeavoured to wring from them promises of religious toleration. But they were obstinate, having the fear of "sectaries" before them, believing, like all weak men, that a reasonable concession to liberty would be encouragement of unbridled licence. Their fears were not without reason. The army was becoming increasingly fanatical and violent. A manifesto was issued

[1] Berkeley's Memoirs, 44.

on October the 18th, and sent to Cromwell and Fairfax, in which the agitators definitely expressed their views upon the necessity of the present Parliament being dissolved forthwith, and a new one elected by manhood suffrage — lords and kingship to be abolished. This spurred Cromwell to one final effort to bring about some agreement between the king and Parliament. On the 20th of October he rose in the House of Commons and spoke for three hours, repudiating any share in the manifesto, and stating positively that he, with Fairfax, wished only to strengthen the monarchy, not to destroy it.

This was the truth, though few then believed it. To Cromwell, a monarchy under safeguards was the only form of government likely to take permanent hold upon the English people. How right he was in this opinion the Puritans knew to their bitter cost after his death. But it was not monarchy as Charles the First understood the word; it was the constitutional monarchy of the present day.

When Cromwell left the House after the debate he had said his last word for compromise and peace. He had done his uttermost for it, and failed.

A short time before he had been obliged to choose between the Presbyterian Parliament and the army. Now, the alternative lay between casting in his lot with a "malignant" king who, though he honestly intended to be a "Pater Patria," had by his acts proved a weak and selfish tyrant; or of standing side by side with the "sectaries" and "saints" of the army, and the republicans in the House of Commons. No middle course was possible. And behind it all was the nation, indifferent alike to religious prejudice or republican ideal, calling

piteously for "Peace, peace," but helpless to procure it against either Presbyterians or army. Of the nation Cromwell had been thinking when he strove to come to terms with king and Parliament. Of the nation he thought still, when, at last, he turned his back on Charles.

Resolutely and deliberately he made his choice, and having made it, stood by it to the end.

"The people, Lord, the people—not crowns or thrones, but *men*."

Cromwell's first step in this direction was to call an Army Council, at which all the leaders of the "levelling" party were present. The subject to be discussed was the manifesto of the agitators, and Cromwell took the chair.

His speech, which has been preserved to us,[1] is highly characteristic. The manifesto, he admitted, possessed strong points, but it was unpractical, and therefore dangerous.

[1] "Give me leave to say this: There will be very great mountains in the way of this; it is not enough to propose things that are good in the end, but it is our duty as Christians and men to consider consequences."

He closed his speech with the suggestion that their grievances concerning arrears of pay, indemnity, and so forth should first be pressed upon Parliament, and if need be the nation, but only these grievances. After those were settled, let them "tender anything for the good of the public" which they thought fit.

A stormy debate followed, and then an adjournment to prayer. Cromwell, as his last word, urged them all to be united, and not allow any bitterness of spirit to divide

[1] Clarke Papers, vol. i. p. 238.

them. After the prayer-meeting the discussion waxed fiercer than ever, the Levellers getting somewhat the worst of it. When the speakers had exhausted themselves, upon Cromwell's suggestion the matter was ultimately referred to a committee. A document was drawn up and adopted, which differed in essentials very little from Ireton's "The Heads of the Proposals," definite provision in the proposed form of government being still made for a king. Yet though Cromwell supported this amendment, there is no evidence that he again advocated any further overtures to Charles. His main object in all these discussions was to make the men hesitate, as he was doing himself, and think long and deeply before they plunged. Above all, he warned them not to lightly take away the power of Parliament. "Either they are a Parliament or no Parliament," he said. "If they be no Parliament, they are nothing, and we are nothing likewise."

Phrases such as these, which frequently occur throughout these debates of the army, indicate the conservatism of Cromwell's nature, and throw into sharp relief the gravity of the crisis which followed, and through which he cut his way at last at the sword's point.

For the present, with Ireton's assistance, he kept a tight rein upon the army. In answer to the fanatics who declared, "the king guilty of all bloodshed . . . and famine that hath been occasioned by the war . . . that this hath been a voice from heaven to us, that we have sinned against the Lord," he said curtly, "No man receives anything in the name of the Lord further than the light of his conscience approves."

But matters were fast nearing a climax, and signs were not wanting that open mutiny against Fairfax would

come next. The anger of the soldiers with the king was reaching boiling-point. Even Parliament, hearing grave news of Royalist gatherings in Scotland, began to feel that a mine was at work beneath their feet, which might explode at any moment. In confirmation of this came the startling intelligence that the Scottish Commissioners with a party of horsemen had urged Charles to fly with them to the North. He had refused, saying that he had given his parole; for in all matters concerning his private honour Charles was a strictly honourable man. A few days later he withdrew his parole; and at the same time a letter was received from these Commissioners asking that his Majesty be removed to London, to begin a personal negotiation with the Lords and Commons. This request, with the present openly aggressive attitude of the city towards the army, was so significant of a deeply-laid plot to place Charles on the throne, that the agitators completely lost their heads. Many of them believed that Fairfax and Cromwell were accomplices, if not the chief movers, in a conspiracy to crush the soldiers for the advantage of the city and the Parliament; and even those who did not credit such an absurdity, felt that the generals were the chief obstacles in the way of the fulfilment of their dreams of a new era of democracy. They now determined to appeal to the soldiers against the Army Council, and Cromwell received information that at a review of the army to be held on the 15th of November, on Corkbush Field, near Ware, the Levellers intended to strike a decisive blow against Fairfax and himself.

This roused him to stern, immediate action. A manifesto was drawn up in Fairfax's name, declaring that unless discipline were restored he would resign his command. If, however, the soldiers duly submitted he would urge

Parliament to dissolve and to make provision that its successor should be really representative of the people. As a recognition of this concession from Fairfax every soldier was to sign a paper in which he swore to maintain Fairfax's authority.

The day after the manifesto was issued six regiments, four of horse and two of foot, assembled according to orders. They were thoroughly loyal and signed Fairfax's paper readily, turning a deaf ear to certain officers who tried to prevent them. But with these regiments appeared two others, which had marched there on their own initiative—a directly mutinous act, as they had been ordered elsewhere. Cromwell and Fairfax at once rode up to these men, and found that they had stuck in their hats copies of the original manifesto, and the motto, "England's freedom! Soldiers' rights." One regiment, Harrison's, when addressed by Fairfax, submitted at once. But the other, Lilburn's, answered him with defiant cries. The men had driven away most of their officers, and were beyond control.

The scene which followed must have sunk deeply into the hearts of the officers who witnessed it. Fairfax would have spoken again. Cromwell saw that words were useless. Leaving the general's side he rode straight into the ranks, and ordered the men to take the papers from their hats. They refused, upon which he drew his sword and charged them. Such action from any other man would have been fatal. But Cromwell knew what he was doing. The sight of "Old Noll's" face wearing the look they had seen at Marston Moor and Naseby, but with his sword pointed at their own breasts, was too much for the men. Fanatics they might be, but they were soldiers first. They could not strike the commander who had ever led them

to victory; they could not resist the indomitable force and resolution which had crushed their enemies. As he turned upon them with blazing eyes and drawn sword, they shrank before him, and first one, then a company, then the whole regiment, tore the papers from their hats and asked for pardon. It was granted, but the ringleaders were taken prisoner, three condemned to death, and one executed. The mutiny was thus quelled at a blow, with the loss of one life. Cromwell received the thanks of Parliament; and from that time forth, hated as he was still, he began to be respected even by his enemies as the nation's strongest man.

Charles, by this time, had escaped from Hampton Court. He gave as the excuse the danger to which his life was exposed from the Levellers. But in face of the assurances of the captain of his guard, Colonel Whalley, the excuse was a thin one. As a proof of the care taken by the chiefs of the army to protect Charles against violence, we have that well-known line from Cromwell to Whalley—

"There are rumours abroad of some intended attempt on his Majesty's person. Therefore I pray have a care of your guards. If any such thing should be done it would be accounted a most horrid act."

It is probable that Charles was beginning to feel that nothing was to be done with these Puritans, and as his schemes for setting them and the Presbyterians by the ears had turned out abortive, his position in England was becoming extremely equivocal. He rode in disguise to the coast, and waited for a vessel which he hoped would have met him there and taken him to France. It never appeared, and he gave himself up to Robert Hammond, Governor of Carisbrooke Castle, Isle of Wight, a man whom he hoped he might gain over if things became critical.

From this retreat he wrote to Parliament, offering terms which, had they come earlier, might have been accepted. It was too late now. No one would trust him. The Houses took no notice of his letter, and Cromwell and other officers, deeply suspicious of the purpose of his escape, began to watch with severest vigilance any signs of definite treaty with the Scots. This evidence was not long in appearing. How it came to Cromwell's knowledge we do not know. There is the well-known story of the capture at the Blue Boar, Holborn, of a letter from Charles to the queen, in which he said that he was "courted by both factions, the Scotch Presbyterians and the army, and which bid fairest for him should have him, but he thought he should close with the Scots." There is another that Cromwell, through intelligence received from a spy, intercepted a letter from the queen to Charles, which informed him that the Scots were raising an army on his behalf. He sealed up the letter after reading it, and, it is said, sent it on to the king as if it had come in ordinary course, and then, later, inquired whether his Majesty knew of any such rising in Scotland, and was told he did not.

But however the news came, it is certain that Cromwell found out that Charles, at the time he was declaring to the English Parliament his entire willingness to meet their demands half-way, was promising still more to the Scots, and that from this day Cromwell felt that no more overtures to or from Charles must be considered. That he was justified in such an attitude can hardly be denied. Further Cromwell did not go at present. But events were crowding fast upon the political horizon which would carry Cromwell many degrees beyond this. He had not striven so intensely all these weary months

for peace to view with calmness, looming close at hand, the most terrible curse that could befall an impoverished, exhausted nation—a second civil war. In his mind, as in the mind of many others, any man proved to have fomented or countenanced such an outrage upon the people of England had committed a capital crime. And when that man called himself a king, and talked about being a "father of his country," and then stabbed it with his eyes open, he was guilty of murder, and merited death.

CHAPTER XIX

THE news that an army from Scotland, under the Duke of Hamilton, an avowed Royalist, was to invade England, and that malignants all over the country were making ready for another revolt, brought upon the English army a crisis more terrible and overwhelming than it had yet known. Unless the differences between the agitators and their chief officers could be made up, and all unite against the common enemy, they were doomed to speedy annihilation. They stood alone, without friends, supplies, or money.

The position of Cromwell and the other leaders in the army in the spring of 1648 is put by Carlyle in one pregnant paragraph with such force and clearness, that we give it as it stands—

"Elements of destruction everywhere under and around them: their lot either to conquer or ignominiously to die. A King not to be bargained with: kept in Carisbrooke, the centre of all factious hopes, of world-wide intrigues: that is one element. A great Royalist party, subdued with difficulty, and ready at any moment to rise again: that is another. A great Presbyterian party, at the head of which is London city, 'the Purse-bearer of the Cause,' highly dissatisfied at the course things had taken, and looking desperately round for new combinations and a new struggle: . . . Add lastly a headlong mutineer, Republican, or Levelling party: and consider there is a working House of Commons which counts about seventy,

divided in pretty equal halves too—the rest waiting what will come of it. Come of *it*, and of the Scotch Army advancing towards it!"

In such a crisis the army, Cromwell leading, saw one course to take, and one only. They must all, Levellers and believers in constitutional monarchy, Republicans, Democrats, Sectaries, and Presbyterians, meet together and pray to God for guidance, open their hearts to one another, speak plainly concerning their mutual mistakes and backslidings, and then try humbly and earnestly as Christians, and as brethren in arms, to find a way of clasping hands once more, and meeting the danger united in spirit, ready to die for one another and the common cause.

[1] "Lieutenant-General Cromwell," writes an old soldier some years later, "did press very earnestly on all there present to a thorough consideration of our actions as an army, and of our ways particularly as private Christians: to see if any iniquity could be found in them; and what it was, that if possible we might find it out, and so remove the cause of such sad rebukes as were upon us (by reason of our iniquities, as we judged) at that time."

A scene which to us of this century is grotesque beyond words. To many it is sanctimonious and hypocritical. To the men who took part in it, it was a real visible outpouring to God Himself of their deepest emotions, their penitence for faults committed, and, most important to history, their resolutions for future conduct.

"And in this path the Lord led us, not only to see our sin, but also our duty; and this so unanimously set with weight upon each heart, that none was able hardly to speak a word to each other for bitter weeping."

[1] Carlyle, Part iii. p. 264.

"Does the modern reader mark it," exclaims Carlyle, "and who they are that weep!"

If he does, it is to smile; or to shrug his shoulders with a half-contemptuous sigh at the incomprehensibility of it all. In this he is not, perhaps, to blame. But before he laughs at these men who wept, let him read the history of the second Civil War!

"And yet we were also helped with fear and trembling, to rejoice in the Lord . . . who no sooner brought us to His feet . . . but he did direct our steps; and presently we were led and helped to a clear agreement among ourselves, not any dissenting, That it was the duty of our day, with the forces we had, to go out and fight against those potent enemies, which that year in all places appeared against us. With an humble confidence, in the name of the Lord only, that we should destroy them. And we were also enabled then, after serious seeking His face, to come to a very clear and joint resolution. . . . That it was our duty, if ever the Lord brought us back again in peace, to call Charles Stuart, that man of blood, to an account for that blood he had shed, and mischief he had done to his utmost against the Lord's cause and People in these poor Nations."

Cromwell's hope was realised (see p. 176). The army was united once more. It would fight, and with a spirit which would count the bitterest hardships and privations and even death as nothing, could it but defeat its enemies and fulfil the will of God.

Well for the Puritan cause that this was the resolve of the army. The men were badly clothed; their pay still in arrears; foes surrounded them on every side. When they marched northward under Cromwell to crush the rising which had already broken out in Wales, they left

London behind them simmering and uneasy. Though temporarily pacified by timely moderation and diplomacy on the part of Fairfax and Cromwell, and unable to make up its mind to decide for Charles, the city refused flatly to advance a farthing to aid the men who, in reality, were the only bulwark it possessed against Hamilton's hungry, plundering Scottish Cavaliers, now approaching the Border.

The army had to divide. Kent had risen, and Essex and Fairfax marched thither, while Cromwell sped to Wales to lay siege to Pembroke Castle, the centre of the troubles there. The war did not open hopefully for the army. Though Fairfax speedily disposed of Kent and laid determined siege to Colchester, Cromwell was held fast before Pembroke; and it seemed likely that the Scots would be across the Border before he was free to meet them. The only force besides his own available in the North was a small body of cavalry under Lambert, sufficient to watch and hinder the Scots, but not to attack them.

All through May and June the hopes of the Cavaliers ran high. A letter of Cromwell's to Fairfax on the 28th of June sets forth some of his difficulties.

[1] "The country, since we sat down before this place (Pembroke) have made two or three insurrections, and are ready to do it every day. So that—what with looking to them, and disposing our horse to that end, and to get us in provisions, without which we should starve, this country being so miserably exhausted and so poor, and we no money to buy victuals—indeed, whatever may be thought, it's a mercy we have been able to keep our men together in the midst of such necessity. The sustenance of the food for most part being but bread and water."

July the 8th saw the Scottish army, from 15,000 to

[1] Carlyle, Part iv. Letter lxi. p. 275.

20,000 men, across the Border. Cromwell, still before Pembroke, had only 6000 to 7000. Their clothes were ragged; they were shoeless, half-starved. Never had the Puritan cause looked so hopeless. But in these gaunt and jaded men there burned an unquenchable determination; and, above all, *a knowledge of warfare* that made them more formidable than any who judged by outward appearance could have conceived.

On July the 11th Pembroke gave way, and Cromwell was free. By quick, forced marches, "287 miles in thirteen days,"[1] he joined Lambert in Yorkshire. On the way he had his men provided with boots and stockings. From this date, July 27, until he fell in with Hamilton's army at Preston on the 17th of August, Cromwell contrived with such consummate skill and strategy to conceal his movements from the enemy, that when the first attack began it was believed by the Cavaliers that their advance guard only had to deal with a force of 3000 Presbyterians. By the time they found out their mistake the Lion had made his spring, and though the Royalists fought gallantly and well, they were outmanœuvred on all hands. Unprepared for such an onslaught, Hamilton, though brave enough, had neither the experience, nor the authority over his subordinate commanders, to make any effective resistance. The army was scattered and disunited. If it had been allowed time to concentrate, the quality of the troops, which in many instances were excellent, would have made it formidable. But Cromwell gave no breathing space at all. His men, in spite of their hard work, were now in excellent fighting trim, and were led by their

[1] Accounts of Preston campaign are taken principally from "Translation from Hoenig's 'Oliver Cromwell,'" in *Journal of United Service Institution*, vol. xlii. No. 245.

officers with unflagging energy and resource. From the first onset it was plain that the Royalists would be defeated. Cromwell's chief aim was to make the victory so complete that hardly a man should return to Scotland. He performed his work in a manner which has excited the warmest admiration of military men; and on the 25th of August, a week after the battle first began, Hamilton himself was taken prisoner at Uttoxeter, in Staffordshire.

Preston was the death-blow of the war. On August the 28th, Colchester, which had gallantly maintained an obstinate resistance to Fairfax, and was the one great stronghold of Royalism in the South, yielded unconditionally. England was once more at peace under Puritan rule.

The price of the war had now to be paid by those who began it. There are bitter accounts of the severity of the army after Preston fight—not in oppression of the common people, but in stern execution of justice upon their leaders. It must be borne in mind that this war was to the army a most wicked thing—unprovoked and undeserved. Since Naseby they had taken no revenge for Rupert's raids and Goring's crimes. They—the soldiers—had received no recompense in any shape or form for all their toil and danger and loss of homes and friends, which they had endured from Edgehill in 1642 to the day Oxford fell in 1646.

Even their leaders, who were so freely accused of battening on the estates and fortunes of the beaten Cavaliers, had for the most part made little use, if any, of the rewards that Parliament profusely voted them from time to time. Cromwell returned nearly all that he received or was supposed to receive.[1]

[1] Carlyle, Part iii. p. 254.

Instead of endeavouring to ruin the men they had conquered, they had lived poorly, and worked hard for a "settlement" of the government of the country, many of them for such a settlement as would have placed Charles and many of his court in a better position financially than they had been before the war. Titles to property, after due toll in fines had been exacted, were to be fully respected. Every man, after reasonable punishment for treason to the commonweal, was to "enjoy his own again." All this they had proven by their acts as well as words. In the midst of their strivings the Royalists chose to plot and plan and carry out another war. This —so held the army—was worse treason to the nation than had been committed yet. Moreover, in the North, the accounts of the behaviour of Hamilton's army were blood-curdling. The humblest cottagers, it is said, had not only been stripped of everything they possessed, but the soldiers seized and carried off children for ransom, butchering them when no money was forthcoming.

Foremost of all "delinquents," in the minds of the army, stood King Charles himself. In his name, and by his authority, all this bloodshed and crime had been committed. They held him personally responsible for the untold misery, the loss of life, the frightful suffering which these terrible months had wrought. All through the bitter depression of the siege of Pembroke, the weary, exhausting march northward, the soldiers thought of their oath at the prayer-meeting at Windsor—

"That, if ever the Lord brought us back again in peace, to call Charles Stuart, that man of blood, to an account."

And when they saw starving, plundered peasants,

when their comrades died in torture of their wounds, they said, "this is *his* work," and the vow sank into their hearts as if seared with red-hot irons.

And now, in October, their work done, their enemies crushed, they marched back to London to redeem their pledge. It is not our intention to defend or attack these men. That has been done by every writer of English history since the day Charles went to his account. We only venture to set forth, so far as we can realise at this distance of time, the incidents and the train of thought which brought the army to a man to the conviction that, come what would, Charles Stuart must die.

The majority of Englishmen to-day, or perhaps of any day, will never be convinced that the execution of the king was a justifiable act. It was illegal and unconstitutional, and, worst of all, it was killing in cold blood a really well-intentioned man, of rare courage and constancy, who had already paid dearly for his shortcomings in much suffering, and whose private life was without a stain. Even those who had been wronged most bitterly by Charles's duplicity in politics, and who knew that were he to regain the throne his first act would be to sign their death-warrants, recoiled from the stern call of "Justice" from the army when the king was tried, as they would from the cry of a wild beast. While those Royalists, who, in their blind faith and ignorance, canonised as "Saint" and "the Lord's Anointed" the poor, mistaken, narrow-minded, intriguing phantom of a king! Who shall wonder at their undying hatred and loathing for those who dared to say that he was as other men, and who struck him down?

All these elements, which smoulder in the nation even yet, were burning in January 1649 with a fierceness and

intensity that we sometimes fail to realise when we judge the Regicides.

One by one, when the trial of the king really began, and Charles, true to his royal blood and haughty nature, stood erect and scornful before his accusers, daring them to do their worst, "every inch a king"; when from all over England, and from other nations, came a universal shudder and cry of horror at such a deed—one by one, these men in Parliament, and many officers who had before called loudly for his blood, shrank back and held their peace, dismayed at the storm they had called forth. So great indeed was the revulsion of feeling, that for some days the fate of the king seemed to hang in the balance, and, but for two things, the sentence upon Charles might have been commuted to banishment, or imprisonment for life.

The first of these was the determination, already mentioned, of the rank and file of the army and the lower ranks of officers; the other, Oliver Cromwell.

Cromwell also, like his soldiers, had made up his mind that Charles must die. He had hesitated long before he did so; and the conviction came at last by a different process of thought from theirs. But it was there now, unalterable, irrevocable. He had been the last of all to agree to its necessity. He had striven, as no other man had done, to save Charles from his enemies, and from himself. All this we have seen. But he had failed. Why? That question, after Cromwell knew that he *had* failed, he must have put to himself again and again throughout the months that elapsed before the army returned triumphant to London. Why? Because this man, Charles Stuart, had placed, and always would place, his private interest, his crown, before the welfare of his

people. He cared nothing for his distracted country in comparison to the establishment of himself and his heirs upon the throne. It followed, so Cromwell reasoned, that if Charles were to continue to live, this country of England, which was literally bleeding to death, would never be safe. Charles would be a centre of intrigue in the future as he had been in the past, whether he were abroad or at home, whether he were confined in a dungeon or in a private dwelling-house. So, for the country's sake, he must die.

Once Cromwell had come to such a resolution, nothing could turn him from his course. The king must die. It was for the good of the nation. *It was the will of God.*

That Cromwell had to defy, and make others defy, all forms of law or constitutional usage; that he awakened incalculable enmity, and the execration of innumerable generations to come; that, hardest of all, he had to set aside his personal feeling of compassion and sympathy for a brave man, was as nothing to him when once convinced that it was the will of God.

Thenceforth, all through the days of stress and uncertainty, Cromwell worked for the end that he had marked out as right, and his strength of purpose, guided by the shrewd sagacity that never forsook him, supported by the men who, had they chosen, could have laid London waste, and who held the very kingdom by the throat, overcame all obstacles, and Charles was executed.

What Cromwell's personal feelings were at the end, when Charles *the man* endeared himself to his people for all time by his calm heroism, and blotted out for many many years all remembrance of what Charles *the king* had done, we have no means of knowing with any certainty.

The tales of his buffoonery at the signing of the death-warrant may be dismissed with contempt. The only story that bears the stamp of truth is related by Herbert, the king's chaplain:—

"The night after King Charles was beheaded," he wrote, "my Lord Southampton and a friend of his got leave to sit by the body in the banqueting House at Whitehall. . . . By and bye the door opened, and a man entered very much muffled up in his cloak, and his face quite hid in it. He approached the body, and then shook his head, sighed out the words, 'Cruel necessity.' He then departed in the same slow and concealed manner as he had come. Lord Southampton used to say that he could not distinguish anything of his face; but that by his voice and gait he took him to be Oliver Cromwell."

CHAPTER XX

The king was executed on January 30, 1649. On February 21, a Council of State, numbering forty-one members, was nominated by Parliament, and became the chief governing force of the nation. It was an unwieldy body, too large for a Cabinet, too small to be representative of the House of Commons; but it was the best which could be arranged under the circumstances. Cromwell and Fairfax sat upon it, also Ludlow and the Republicans.

No council, however, so composed, could satisfactorily govern a nation torn in pieces by two civil wars. The councillors were mostly good and honest men, intent upon doing their duty; but the majority were narrow, bigoted, and prejudiced. The business they set before themselves —to make England into "a Commonwealth or Free State," which "shall appoint and constitute officers and ministers under them for the good of the people, and that without any King and House of Lords"—was far more than England, even had it been at peace, could have lived up to or understood.

Their first object should have been the binding up and healing of wounds, and the removal of just discontents; and, while presenting a firm front against rebellion, doing as little as possible to aggravate fresh divisions. A policy of thorough internal reform, in fact, was what the country now asked of its rulers; not a fresh Parliament, or mode of government to be elected by a people who were either quivering with the degradation of defeat, or

sternly exultant with victory given to them, they believed by God Himself.

Apart from all questions of internal policy, however, the new Government of England had first to deal with pressing dangers from abroad.

Royalism, stamped out in England, was blazing furiously in Ireland, and before long was to raise its head more stubbornly than ever in Scotland. In Ireland the Catholics and Protestants, who until this time had been divided by their religious differences and the wavering, unstable policy of Charles, now made a determined combination under the Earl of Ormond against the men who had dared to kill the king.

The first debates of the Council and the Commons were occupied with considering ways and means for sending over an army to quell the Irish "rebels."

But great as was the eagerness of every one to conquer Ireland, a project which had been dear to the hearts of all Puritans, especially Cromwell's, since the massacre of Protestants in 1641, and urgent as the matter was likely to become if the Parliament army in the north of Ireland were destroyed and the country became a hostile territory, there were vast obstacles in the way, which it seemed probable the Government would not have the strength to remove. Firstly, there was the usual one—want of money. Secondly, a renewed spirit of mutiny and unrest in the army, more dangerous and widespread than before the war.

The first problem was solved, after protracted negotiations, by a loan from the City of £120,000. The second was far more difficult. Indeed, but for Cromwell it must have been the ruin of the cause.

The army had become a body of keen politicians.

The long strife with Parliament and the Presbyterians had encouraged and trained each man to conceive definite opinions upon the deepest questions of State. These soldiers were not mere wind-bags or self-centred demagogues fighting for one class against many; but earnest men with very high ideals, which they believed it was the duty of the chiefs of the State to carry into practice without a day's delay. Their mistake lay here, and the danger to the Government. These soldiers, simple-minded to a degree, in spite of their power and experience, thought that as God had declared Himself to be on their side, and given them victory in so miraculous a way, He intended the millennium to follow. The duty of the heads of the State, they thought, was to set about the establishment of an ideal Republic, governed by a Parliament freely elected by the people, rich and poor alike; such Parliament to have direct control of all affairs of State, and the appointment of all the officers. When they saw that the members of the old Parliament showed no signs of relinquishing their seats; when the executive powers were placed in the hands of the Council of State, which evinced no burning eagerness to bring in sweeping reforms—then they began to be suspicious and restless. And when, at last, instead of a dissolution and new Government, preparations were begun for an expedition to Ireland, the smouldering discontent of the men burst into flame.

On 20th April 1649, Cromwell having been appointed commander of the forces for Ireland, and the city of London having duly agreed to find £120,000, the Council of the Army met to decide what regiments were to go upon that service.

"After a solemn seeking of God in prayer," it was

resolved that the officers of all regiments should draw lots. The lots were handed to the officers by a child —a quaint device to prevent favouritism—and those on whom the choice fell were said to have "expressed much cheerfulness." If they did so, they counted without their men. On the 26th of April a troop of Colonel Whalley's regiment mutinied, though they were not ordered to Ireland. Cromwell and Fairfax had them seized, and tried the ringleaders by court-martial. Five were condemned to death, but four of them were reprieved. The fifth, named Lockyer, "a very brave young man, but three and twenty" the accounts say, was shot. It had to be. To allow mutiny to go unpunished at that time, when the safety of the State depended upon order and discipline being maintained, would have been suicidal. The least was done that could be done; but *one* man must die. The act was thoroughly unpopular. For the first and last time the London citizens sympathised with the soldiers. "About one hundred went before the corpse" at the funeral. "Some thousands followed in rank and file; all had sea-green and black ribbon—the Levellers' colours—tied on their hats and to their breasts."

The mutineer was thought to be a martyr for the people's liberty, and Cromwell and Fairfax were looked upon as the bloodiest of tyrants. The situation was very grave. Ugly rumours were abroad that every regiment in the army was honey-combed with sedition, and full of a deep resentment at the execution of the young Leveller.

Cromwell took action with his usual promptness, and ordering a review of the troops in Hyde Park on May the 9th, addressed them at some length with great

earnestness. It was not a time for threats of violence. They were not mere servants of the State, but citizens of a commonwealth, and were to be appealed to as such by reasonable, telling arguments. No one knew how to do that better than Cromwell; and from no other man, in spite of all that was said by those who did not know him, would these arguments have such weight. He told them of the work Parliament had done since January; the punishment dealt to delinquents; the vote—just passed—by which the Commons had, at last, approved their own dissolution at an early date; the better protection of trade which the Commons were considering; the improvement of the navy; and last, and most important, he reminded them that the money due to the army had all been paid, and that the future payments were carefully provided for. Then, having given evidence that Parliament, and its Council, had been doing their duty, he called upon them to do theirs, or—leave the army. He offered to all who were weary of serving the cause by arms free permission to depart, with their pay up to date. Then he paused, and watched the effect of his arguments. They had gone home. Not a man left the ranks; those who were wearing the Leveller colours had them torn from their hats; order and discipline and loyalty were fully restored.

This was in London. In the country the discontent was deeper and spread far.

In Oxfordshire two hundred men, led by one Captain Thompson, mutinied outright. They were dispersed by the colonel of the regiment, and some escaped. At Salisbury a thousand men, with certain subalterns, left the ranks and declared against the "murderers of Lockyer."

Matters were now terribly serious. Fairfax and Cromwell, collecting some cavalry, rode after the mutineers.

The men, however, hearing of their approach dared not stand before them. They had no leaders worthy of the name, and retreated in haste, trusting to the mutiny spreading. This, indeed, might have happened, for the army was in a state of deep unrest, had the discontent had time to mature. But Cromwell gave no time. Day and night he followed the mutineers—fifty miles the last day—and, unresting still, at midnight when they were in their beds unaware that he was in the neighbourhood, he attacked them at Burford swiftly and hard. They "hustled the Lieutenant-General a short while," it is said, but speedily gave in, and there was no loss of life.

The next day their fate was decided. One man in every ten was condemned to death. The rest were placed on the roof of a church to watch their comrades die among the grave-stones below. Three were then shot in succession; but the fourth, who "expressed penitence," was pardoned, and the rest reprieved. The grim service of death was brought to a close by the assembling of all the surviving mutineers in the church to hear an address from Cromwell.

[1] He "rebuked, admonished; said, the General in his mercy had forgiven them. Misguided men, would you ruin the Cause which marvellous Providences have so confirmed to us to be the Cause of God: go, repent; and rebel no more, lest a worse thing befal you."

This, or something like this, Cromwell preached that day, speaking from his heart. For he loved these men, "misguided" as they were. It hurt him deeply to punish them, and they knew it. "They wept" at his words; and by-and-by went to Ireland with the rest, and gave no further trouble to the Commonwealth.

[1] Carlyle, Part v. p. 28.

This business at Burford ended the whole matter. Again Cromwell had seized the danger by the throat and crushed the life out of it. Public opinion throughout the country recognised his service. It had been slow to know the man. It had listened to every lie that malice could invent about him and prejudice swallow—conduct for which it was not much to be blamed, for, as has been said, Cromwell habitually slighted public opinion. Not until he became Protector did he begin to understand the importance of conciliating it, and then he learned his lesson very slowly. Before that, he treated it with a contempt it never forgave. But now the law-abiding portion of the population recovering from visions of an army at large and uncontrolled, turning the country upside down, felt a sudden glow of gratitude to their strongest man. They feasted him at Oxford University and in the City. Compliments were showered upon his head from all sides, men who until quite lately had been unable to mention his name without a shudder or a curse sought for the honour of his acquaintance, and fawned on him. All of which Cromwell accepted quietly, patiently, but with much inward weariness of soul. These blandishments had no charms for such a man. He knew better than any one that though in many instances sincerely meant, they were in reality but the expression of a people's relief in finding some mighty personal force to rest on. He had once been deemed a dangerous democrat; but was now regarded as a bulwark against anarchy and license, a security to property, an assurance of stability in the State, and as such an encouragement to trade and learning, and all the arts of peace.

Preparations for Ireland now went on apace. On the 10th of July Cromwell left London for the coast, the

newspapers wrote,[1] "in that state and equipage as the like hath hardly been seen . . . his life-guard consisting of eighty gallant men, the meanest whereof a Commander or Esquire."

Yet, though in station Cromwell was now a great man —the greatest in the land; at heart, and in his private life, he was just what he had ever been, a simple-natured country gentleman.

In Carlyle's "Letters and Speeches" there is a series of letters written by Cromwell to his son Richard's father-in-law, Mr. Mayor, of Hursley, which gives a quaint picture of the Lieutenant-General's views as to what he can afford to allow the young people upon their marriage; and what he expects the girl's dowry to be. Had he been the man his detractors would have us believe, no daughter of a mere squire, without either influence or large means, would have satisfied his ambition. Yet he is eager for the match. From first to last there is not a word to show that he expected the country he had served with such success to provide for him or his. Nor is there an expression in any one of his letters conveying the least impression that he thought the position he had won for himself and his family should be considered by Mr. Mayor in his estimate of the advantages his daughter would gain.

Cromwell deals with his public life as a thing apart. What he did for the State was done because it was his duty—his inevitable duty. If the State recompensed him, that was its affair, not his. He never asked for recompense: never expected it. More than once he refused it. Few, indeed, of our public men can show so clear a page in this respect as Oliver Cromwell.

[1] Carlyle, Part v. p. 30.

As an example of the many letters to his relatives and children that were written about this time, we may give one written to Dorothy Mayor, after she became Richard's wife. This is the last letter Cromwell wrote before he sailed for Ireland. Tender, simple, kind, with an additional touch of seriousness, for the journey upon which he was going was a perilous one. It might be the last letter she would ever receive from his hand.

"FROM ABOARD THE 'JOHN,'
13th August 1649.

[1] "MY DEAR DAUGHTER,—Your letter was very welcome to me. I like to see anything from your hand: because indeed I stick not to say I do entirely love you. And therefore I hope a word of advice will not be unwelcome nor unacceptable to thee.

"I desire you both to make it above all things your business to seek the Lord: to be frequently calling upon Him, that He would manifest Himself to you in His Son; and be listening what returns He makes to you—for He will be speaking in your ear, and in your heart, if you attend thereunto. I desire you to provoke your Husband likewise thereunto. As for the pleasures of this Life and outward Business, let that be upon the bye. Be above all these things by Faith in Christ; and then you shall have the true use and comfort of them,—and not otherwise. I have much satisfaction in hope that your spirit is this way set; and I desire you may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and that I may hear thereof. The Lord is very near: which we see by His wonderful works: and therefore He looks that we of this generation draw near to Him. This

[1] Carlyle, Part v. Letter ci. p. 38.

late great Mercy of Ireland is a great manifestation thereof" (a victory of Parliament troops at Dublin). "Your Husband will acquaint you with it. We should be much stirred up in our spirits to thankfulness. We much need the spirit of Christ, to enable us to praise God for so admirable a mercy.

"The Lord bless thee, my dear Daughter.

"I rest, thy loving father,

"OLIVER CROMWELL."

This was on the 13th of August. On the 15th the army arrived in Dublin, from which city Michael Jones, who held it for the Parliament, welcomed his commander "with great guns."

CHAPTER XXI

In considering the campaign in Ireland, the darkest chapter in Cromwell's life, it is necessary, if we are to take a dispassionate and comprehensive view of the matter, to realise as far as possible the spirit in which the Puritan army set about the work which lay before it, and precisely what this work, from the point of view of the army, was to be.

There were three elements in this "invasion" of Ireland, which inevitably gave to it, apart from any isolated acts of cruelty, a peculiar severity and sternness.

In the first place, there was the feeling on all hands, in the hearts of officers as well as men, that they went as avengers of blood. The massacre of Protestants in 1641 had never been forgiven or forgotten. It was as fresh in the minds of Cromwell's soldiers, and of Cromwell himself, as in the dark days before the war, when all over England men gnashed their teeth with rage and horror too deep for words at the accounts which reached them of the unspeakable outrages inflicted upon women and children, and the murder in cold blood of men of all ranks, simply, it was believed, on the score of their religion. A historian, whose words were read at that date with respect, had written:—

[1] "The innocent Protestants were upon a sudden deprived of their estates, and the persons of above two hundred thousand men, women, and children murdered;

[1] May's History of the Parliament, 1647, vol. ii. p. 4.

many of them with exquisite tortures, within the space of a month."

We believe, now, that these accounts were greatly exaggerated, and no mention was made of what the Catholics had to endure from the Protestants before they rebelled. But this was unknown at the time by the Puritans. The majority of Englishmen believed that the native Irish were barbarians of the grossest kind, hounded on to their atrocious crimes by a bloodthirsty, unscrupulous Roman Catholic priesthood.

During the eight years which had intervened since then, this feeling among the Puritans had been deepening and growing, accentuated by the dread that an army of Irish would land on their own shores at some critical period of the war, and lay England waste with like enormities. This dread of an Irish invasion brings us to the second element.

The attack on Ireland was not, strictly speaking, intended to be an act of aggression at all, but a necessary defensive measure, to protect the western counties of England and Wales from incursions of marauders, and possibly the whole nation from an invasion of Irish Cavaliers. Cromwell, at least, was strongly convinced of the necessity of the war from this point of view, and it was his deliberate intention from the first to so effectually crush out all harmfulness in the armed population of the country that it should never have the power, if it had the will, of molesting its neighbours. When we consider that the greater number of Irishmen, from various causes, were bearing arms at that time, and had no intention of doing otherwise, whether bidden by king, Puritan, or the Pope himself, it is easy to see that whatever precautions Cromwell might have determined to take against following the

example of the cavaliers and punishing the innocent with the guilty—and he did take many—he would be unable to effect the main object of his mission without committing acts which a high-spirited people must bitterly resent while the race exists.

Yet, in view of the intrigues which the young king, Charles II., was already beginning in Ireland, and the well-known fact that the Catholics and Protestants had sunk their differences in order to make a sustained effort on his behalf, the fear that Ireland, if not practically "annexed," would prove a hotbed of danger for the Puritan cause, was not ill-founded. And, short of thoroughly subduing it, there was nothing to be done.

The third element, of which Cromwell's experience as a soldier must have warned him before the campaign began, but which became a matter of desperate urgency later on, was his isolation in a hostile country, with a comparatively small force, surrounded by enemies who considerably outnumbered him, and who, if the struggle were prolonged, would wear him out. Therefore, it was essential that every victory he won should be decisive and overwhelming—a necessity which seemed to him to justify, together with the character, as he conceived it, of the foe he had to meet, the wholesale slaughters of Wexford and Drogheda.

But behind all the positive elements incidental to the particular work of subduing Ireland, there was another cause for its harshness which cannot be lost sight of by history.

No man, however humane and tender-hearted by nature he may be—and that Cromwell was naturally averse to bloodshed and inclined to mercy is undeniable—can preserve his sensitiveness to causing pain or death

after he has experienced years of familiarity with war. This fact has not been given sufficient weight by historians, who, for the most part being men of peace themselves, do not know from personal experience how natural it is in such circumstances to hold life cheaply, or rather, how impossible it is to do otherwise when the first horror has worn off.

Cromwell and his army were veteran soldiers. As such they thought little of facing death, or of killing others. And, believing they were doing it in a good cause, had as little compunction in taking the lives of Irishmen, as our men felt in killing Sepoys after the Indian Mutiny, or as frontiersmen in the United States feel to-day in shooting Apache Indians after a raid on a settlement.

Lastly, it has always to be remembered that the same bitterness which the army felt when they met their old foes, the Cavaliers, at Preston and Colchester, was still in their hearts. Not only were the Englishmen in Ireland, from the Puritan standpoint, engaged in rekindling more strife, and therefore criminals, but they had lost all claim to be treated as fellow-countrymen, or as civilised human beings, because they had taken by the hand the "bloody Irish murderers" of 1641.

However grotesque and unjust this idea may appear to us when applied to such gallant gentlemen and patriots as Ormond and Edmund Verney, it was a grim reality to the Puritans, and where the fortune of war placed the lives of their enemies in their power, it steeled their hearts against all thoughts of mercy.

It may be said, however, and with reason, that though among rude soldiers, the exceptional circumstances which surrounded this Irish war excused, if it did not justify,

extreme measures of severity, no excuse can be made for Cromwell's personal share in the massacre of Drogheda.

It would seem to us, however, as unjust to describe his action in the terms of obloquy used even by those who appreciate him in the main, as it would be disingenuous even in his warmest admirers to conceal their sadness and regret that he should have violated the rules of civilised warfare. This he did at Drogheda, and without justification. But while this must be stated clearly, we should never forget that it was an isolated instance, and that the order was given in the heat of action. It was no part of a deliberate plan to exterminate Irishmen. What Cromwell's attitude towards Irishmen in general was, is made clear enough by the two "Declarations" he sent forth and addressed to the people of Ireland, and rigidly adhered to.

Here is the first, "given at Dublin the 24th of August 1649."[1]

"Whereas I am informed that, upon the marching out of the Armies here to you; or of parties from Garrisons, a liberty hath been taken by the Soldiery to abuse, rob, and pillage, and too often execute cruelties upon the Country People: Being resolved by the grace of God, diligently and strictly to restrain such wickedness for the future;

"I do herebye warn and require all Officers, Soldiers, and others under my command, henceforth To forbear all such evil practices, as aforesaid; and Not to do any wrong or violence toward Country People, or persons whatsoever, unless they be actually in arms or office with the enemy: and Not to meddle with the goods of such, without special order."

[1] Carlyle, Part v. p. 41.

He then goes on to encourage the inhabitants to bring provisions to the army, assuring them, "That they shall not be molested or troubled in their persons or goods"; and that they shall receive ready-money for these goods. Further, that "they, behaving themselves peaceably and quietly, and paying such contributions, proportionately with their neighbours, . . . for maintenance of the Parliament's forces and other public uses—shall have free leave and liberty to live at home with their families and goods: and shall be protected in their persons and estates."

Lastly, that "I require all Soldiers, and others under my command, diligently to take notice and observe the same; as they shall answer to the contrary at their utmost perils."

Such was Cromwell's first act upon landing at Dublin, accompanied by a "huge purge" from the army already fighting in the name of the Parliament, of officers and men whose loose characters and habits unfitted them to belong to a force which tolerated no immorality in friend or foe.

Immediately after this the campaign commenced, and on the 9th of September the batteries began to play upon Drogheda. It was a strongly fortified place, garrisoned by the finest troops in Ireland, largely English; and officered by such men as Sir Arthur Ashton and Sir Edmond Verney — experienced soldiers, and men of highest courage. As a matter of course, these commanders refused Cromwell's summons to surrender, and their troops, well led and disciplined, fought with the utmost stubbornness when the place was stormed.

"Upon Tuesday the 10th of this Instant,"[1] Cromwell wrote in his account of the battle to Lenthall, the Speaker

[1] Carlyle, Part v. Letter cv. p. 52.

of the Commons, "about five o'clock in the evening we began the Storm; and after some hot disputes we entered, about seven or eight hundred men; the Enemy disputing it very stiffly with us. And, indeed, through the advantages of the place, and the courage God was pleased to give the defenders, our men were forced to retreat quite out of the breach, not without some considerable loss. . . ."

They were beaten back in confusion, Cromwell looking on. Let us conceive the scene. The moment was critical beyond measure, and if the attack failed at this point, all might fail. Cromwell grasped the significance of the danger; and flinging himself personally into the conflict, rallied the men, and led them a second time to the assault. His presence turned the scale, and fighting with a fury and determination which no troops which then existed could withstand, the Puritans broke the ranks of their enemies, and drove them back. It was then, when intoxicated with heat of battle; maddened by the sight of his best men slaughtered round him; and, uppermost in his mind, the bitter anger against these "malignants" who could never let the godly rest, and had now espoused the cause of "bloody Papists," that [1] "the stern command to put all to the sword who were in arms in the town leapt lightly from his lips."

The order was literally obeyed, and Drogheda ran with blood. "I think that night they put to the sword about two thousand men," [2] Cromwell writes.

Some retreated to a "strong round tower." They were "summoned to yield to mercy," but refused. Guards were set to watch them. They fired from one tower, and

[1] Gardiner's History of Commonwealth, vol. i. p. 133.
[2] Carlyle, Letter cv. Part v. p. 53.

"killed and wounded some of our men. When they submitted, their Officers were knocked on the head, and every tenth man of the soldiers killed: and the rest shipped for the Barbadoes."

Later in the letter Cromwell alludes to the massacre thus—

"I am persuaded that this is a righteous judgment of God upon these barbarous wretches, who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood, and that it will tend to prevent the effusion of blood in the future, which are the satisfactory grounds to such actions, which otherwise cannot but work remorse and regret."

These last words have been often quoted both by friends and foes as significant that Cromwell himself felt pangs of "remorse." This may be so; but we venture to doubt it. It was not Cromwell's way; and though in this instance he ordered the massacre when in passion, "being in the heat of action," as he says himself, yet, beyond regret at so much bloodshed being necessary—regretting even the blood of "barbarous wretches"—it would seem to us that he felt the advisability of "an awful example" so forcibly, that it did not occur to him to flinch from the consequences of his act.

Doubtless he was wrong, even in expediency. The horror of his severity, though it spread terror in some quarters, drove brave men to bay. He became a monster in the eyes of his enemies, and they fought him to the death.

At Wexford, the second place, and the last, where beaten men were put to death without quarter, Cromwell was not responsible for the carnage. He had prepared terms for the acceptance of the governor, but had not delivered the letter when the soldiers broke in—the gate

being opened suddenly by a friendly hand—and being stoutly resisted by the inhabitants, killed them without mercy. Yet though this was done without Cromwell's order, and once begun could not be stopped, it is to be noted that Cromwell, by the tone of his report to Parliament, barely disapproved the action. Had the treaty with the governor been made, he would have kept it to the letter, because he never broke his word to friend or foe; but the mistake having occurred, he does not seem to have felt any grief for the loss of life it entailed.

The chief cause of this callousness, never shown before, never seen again, lay, after all, in the feeling that it was a "righteous judgment" for the blood spilt by the Catholics in 1641. His argument was set forth in the letter describing the siege. [1] "And indeed it hath, not without cause, been deeply set upon our hearts, That we intending better to this place than so great a ruin, hoping the Town might be of some use to you and your Army, yet God would not have it so; but, by an unexpected providence, in His righteous justice, brought a just judgment upon them: causing *them* to become a prey to the soldiers who in their piracies had made preys of so many families, and now with their bloods to answer the cruelties which they had exercised upon the lives of divers poor Protestants!"

There were, however, no more massacres. Place after place yielded to conditions, which were never in a single instance violated. Cromwell's worst enemy was the "country sickness," a kind of low fever, probably caused by dampness of the undrained boggy land at that time of the year, October and November. He lost very large numbers of his men, and was in great difficulties in con-

[1] Carlyle, Letter cvii. Part v. p. 69.

sequence. But his work was done, and after nine months of intense labour, anxiety, and much illness, which is supposed to have laid the foundation of the ague from which he ultimately died, he was able to leave the matter in the hands of lesser men and hasten back to England, where new and still graver troubles threatened the infant Commonwealth.

Such was the handiwork of Cromwell in Ireland; a handiwork of crushing by force, and by force alone, the anarchy which had been rampant in the country for a generation. This was bad enough for Ireland, but worse was to come. Cromwell knew as well as any one that mere crushing of rebellion was no permanent remedy. He had to conceive and lay the foundation of a new system of government. Only one occurred to him, namely, that English Protestants must now take the upper hand, and hold it if necessary by sternest means; that Puritan families from England must be encouraged to emigrate there, and take up land torn from its original owners whenever such owners had borne arms against the English Commonwealth.

It was a wrong policy. It was a hopeless policy. It has given us our Irish problem of to-day; and when the ill effects of "Cromwell's Curse" will cease to be felt, no man can tell.

But if after acknowledging this to the fullest extent we lay to Cromwell's charge a deliberate desire to crush Irishmen, and exterminate them off the face of the earth, then we commit injustice. Cromwell bore no ill-will to the Irish as a race; not even to the Catholics, though he abhorred Catholicism. He did not wish to place the Puritans over their heads as masters, but to plant them there as steady reliable neighbours; to live in peace and

amity with them, and simply to be a security against factious disturbances and disloyalty to the government at home.

In his answer to the "manifesto" of the "Supreme Council of Kilkenny," a body of Irish noblemen and priests who had bitterly attacked him, he puts this clearly enough. This reply of Cromwell's is a very noteworthy document. He displays his utter ignorance of the people he was dealing with, and of the problem that lay before the statesman who would create a government for this distracted country: also he shows in a most convincing manner the straightforward honesty of his own intentions, and his genuine astonishment and disgust at the purblind persons, as he conceived them, who could not, or would not, give him credit for absolute good faith and kindness of feeling toward the Irish population, especially in tolerance in religion.

[1] "As for the People, what thoughts they have in matters of Religion in their own breasts I cannot reach, but shall think it my duty, if they walk honestly and peaceably, Not to cause them in the least to suffer for the same."

Concerning the massacres he says—

"Give us an instance of one man since my coming into Ireland, not in arms, massacred, destroyed, or banished; concerning the massacre, or destruction of whom, justice hath not been done or endeavoured to be done."

Finally, he addressed himself to the people—

"And now having said this to you, I have a word to *them*, that in this point, which concerns them in their estates and fortunes, they may know what to trust to.

"Such as have been formerly in arms, may, submit-

[1] Carlyle, Part v. p. 113.

ting themselves, have their cases presented to the State of England—where no doubt the State will be ready to take into consideration the nature and quality of their actings, and deal mercifully with them, . . . and for such Private Soldiers as lay down their arms, and shall live peaceably and honestly at their several homes, they shall be permitted so to do. . . . For such of the Nobility, Gentry and Commons of Ireland as have not been actors in this Rebellion, they shall and may expect the protection in their Goods, Liberties, and Lives which the Law gives them; and in their husbandry, merchandising, manufactures, and other trading whatsoever, the same."

He ends, however, with a stern warning—

"Having said this, and purposing honestly to perform it—if this People shall headily run on after the counsels of their Prelates and Clergy, and other Leaders, I hope to be free from the misery and desolation, blood and ruin that shall befall them: and shall rejoice to exercise utmost severity against them."

No promises, followed by such warnings, could attract Irishmen devoted to their Church; to whom anything in the shape of a Puritan was hateful, and who almost to a man had "borne arms" in the war.

This Cromwell did not see at the time. Yet had he remained in Ireland, who shall say what he might not have accomplished? Alone of his generation, Cromwell was ever ready to learn wisdom by experience. In later years his hatred of "Priests and Prelates" modified considerably. His faith in all kinds of toleration deepened.

But this could not be, and the carrying out of Cromwell's stern initiative policy in Ireland was left in other hands, until the very name of "Cromwell" became symbolic of everything that is cruel, tyrannical, and

unjust. Let us pause, however, before we, too, cast a stone. When we have realised the chaos Cromwell found there, the terrible problems which surrounded him on all sides, Catholic fighting Catholic, Protestant against Protestant, and, above all, the stern immediate necessity of making Puritan rule paramount for the sake of the safety of England—when we have realised this fully, and thought of a better way than he found, then, but not till then, let us presume to judge this man.

CHAPTER XXII

Cromwell returned to England in May 1650. On the 31st of the month he reached London. The whole city came out to welcome him. Fairfax, still his superior officer, greated him cordially; members of Parliament of all shades of opinion presented their compliments and congratulations, while a cheering populace lined the streets.

Times had changed for the man who, two years before, had scarcely a friend on whom he could rely. He was now a national hero in the Puritan world. His mildest suggestions were more potent than ordinances of State; no reward or honour that Parliament could bestow would have been refused to him.

But Cromwell's thoughts, as usual, were bent on other things. He had a brief breathing space with his family, now lodged at the Cockpit, Whitehall; and then, with news of the most serious nature streaming in from all parts, he took up the ever-increasing burdens of his care-worn life, and girded up his loins to go forth and save the Commonwealth from the last and worst peril that was to confront it during his lifetime.

Clouds had been gathering slowly but surely in the North since the fateful execution of the king. For the first time Cavaliers and Covenanters in Scotland, even as the Cavaliers and Catholics had lately done in Ireland, made up their minds to sink differences—as far as was practicable—and make common cause against the Regicides. Had Charles the Second possessed his father's

principles this could never have come to pass; for now, as in times past, it was Presbyterianism, not monarchy, that the bulk of the Scottish nation and its rulers desired to defend. But Charles the Second had no principle—except that of self-preservation—and after negotiations without end, finding no way out of it, he abased himself shamelessly before the men he hated and despised, and became a "Covenanted King." This, at a stroke, placed on his side the whole of the Scottish nation, and converted it into an active enemy of the English Commonwealth.

Nor was this all. The Presbyterians in England, though they no longer held chief control of the State, were a great power in the land, and they had severely disapproved the execution of the king. Should an effective combination, which seemed more than possible, take place between these co-religionists in the two countries, the Commonwealth was doomed.

In this crisis all men who believed in toleration in religion, and in the attempt to govern England by a Parliament without a king, turned to Cromwell as a matter of course as their leader, and as the rock of support in this national danger.

It is a curious commentary to the volumes of abuse poured upon Cromwell as a double-dyed hypocrite, time-server, and traitor, epithets which have been more vigorously applied to him by Republicans and Free-thinkers than by any one else, that no sooner was there a crisis or storm of any kind—threatening the liberty which he was supposed to delight in crushing—than it was to him they all ran for protection. Nor must this be taken as any sign of faint-heartedness or want of courage. Ludlow and Hutchinson, Vane and Bradshaw, were men who knew no fear. It was simply the instinctive leaning

toward the only power which could preserve the liberties that had been so hardly won. They were right to do it, and Cromwell fully justified their faith, though this they never understood. The mistake they made, and which it is very hard to forgive them, is in allowing themselves, as soon as the danger was over, to imagine that Cromwell had built up his power on a basis of selfish ambition, and that he "used" them now, and afterwards, for the purpose of personal aggrandisement.

The difficulties in Cromwell's way were manifold. The first was Fairfax.

When Parliament ordered that an army be equipped and sent northward to repel an invasion from Scotland they appointed Fairfax, with Cromwell's full approval, to command it. The appointment, however, was merely a formal one; and when Fairfax—as was expected by many members—drew back, influenced by his Presbyterian wife, Cromwell was immediately proposed in his place. But Cromwell would have none of this. The time had been when he had attacked without scruple his superior officers; now he stood so firmly in the way of any preference being given to himself, or slight cast upon Fairfax, that his most fervent supporters had to abandon their action; and finally Parliament sent a deputation of four—Lambert, Whitelock, Harrison, and Cromwell himself—to urge Fairfax to reconsider his decision and take command. They failed to do this, but it was through no fault of Cromwell's. Even Ludlow testified, afterwards, that "Cromwell acted his part so to the life that I really thought he wished Fairfax to go."

Cromwell "wished" it for two reasons. In the first place, he respected and trusted Fairfax as a man and a soldier, and he felt the personal slight to his commander

to be unwarranted; in the second place, his policy towards Scotland was to persuade these Presbyterian soldiers, who had fought so bravely side by side with his own regiments at Marston Moor, to sheathe their swords, refuse to support this perjured hypocrite of a "covenanted" Charles, and join hands with the Puritan Commonwealth. This object could be gained, he felt, far more surely by a Presbyterian at the head of the army than by himself. So he pleaded earnestly and long with Fairfax. But it was in vain. Fairfax, though incapable of a treacherous thought toward the commonwealth he had done so much to establish, had definitely made up his mind to aid it no longer. He not only refused to go to Scotland, but resigned his command in the army. This action left the fate of Puritanism in the hands of the Independents.

Fairfax resigned June 26, 1650. Without a day's delay Parliament appointed Cromwell "Captain-General and Commander-in-Chief of all the forces raised, or to be raised, within the commonwealth of England." On the 28th, so great was the urgency of affairs, he set out for Scotland. The gathering together of needful forces occupied three weeks, and it was not until July 19th that he was ready to cross the Tweed, with an army numbering 15,000 men; 9500 foot, 5500 cavalry.

The Scottish army, under Lord Leven, as general, and David Leslie (Cromwell's old comrade at Marston), as lieutenant-general and commander in the field, was said to be about 26,000. There was a great disparity of numbers here. But the English army was a body of veterans in the highest state of discipline; the Scots, for the most part, a force of raw recruits.

A strange spectacle was this Scottish army, and its condition reflected the political confusion of the country.

There were the Presbyterian nobility, and many nobles who were Presbyterians only in name, with Argyle at their head. Their mouths were full of the Covenant, but they cursed it in their hearts, and were anxious to make its conditions as little irksome as possible to the young king. There were also the "malignant" boon companions of the king, and a considerable following of Cavaliers, devoted to royalism; good soldiers, but scoffing at covenants. Then, as the backbone of the army, there was the Kirk, and its devoted followers and supporters, the burgesses of Scotland and middle class generally, uncompromising Covenanters all, hating their Cavalier allies little less than they hated Cromwell's Independents. These Covenanters kept a sharp watch upon Charles himself, and at the least attempt on his part to assume authority over the forces fighting in his name they "purged" the army diligently of any who were more disposed to loyalty to his person than to Presbyterianism. In the first few months of the campaign this was done to the tune of "eighty officers and 3000 soldiers."[1]

Charles's private feelings towards the Kirk and the "Committee of Estates" may be imagined. But he was shrewd, unscrupulous, time-serving. These men of the Covenant were the masters of the situation, and whatever he felt or thought, he allowed them to drive him where they would. Yet the Presbyters had no easy task. Cromwell, apart from his military prowess, was a very dangerous foe. His religious earnestness, marvellous patience, insight into an intricate political crisis, and intimate knowledge of the nature and prejudices of the Scottish soldiery, taught him exactly what arguments and actions were most likely to appeal to them.

[1] Balfour, iv. 89.

As soon as he crossed the Borders he issued manifestoes to the Kirk and the people of Scotland, urging with all the force he could put into words that a true pacification of the people and settlement of religion would only be accomplished by Scotch and English Puritans arranging their differences and casting out Charles Stuart and his malignant Cavaliers. Cromwell particularly emphasised his own reluctance to fight against any "sincere servant of God."

These appeals had no effect at first. The men of the Kirk, from within what they fondly considered to be the impregnable stronghold of Edinburgh Castle, returned a scornful reply, and dubbed the English an army of "sectaries and blasphemers," while Leslie, like a true soldier and nothing more, looked upon all such manifestoes as mere verbiage, intended to throw dust in his eyes and put him off his guard. He therefore stood well to his defences, and trusting to the superior hardiness of his men and his command of the food supply, viewed the approach of the English calmly.

Cromwell, rebuffed for the time being, now began a series of manœuvres to draw his adversary from his position on the height above Edinburgh and bring on an engagement, but without success. Meanwhile he composed more proclamations as rejoinders to the answers of the ministers. These documents are not remarkable for their command of logic, nor is their literary style distinguished. But like all Cromwell's writings, they are deeply interesting from the intense conviction and earnestness which pervades every line. They express the soul of the man, and form a very important index to his attitude on both the religious and political sides of the problem presented him by Scotland. The reply of the ministers

to the first manifesto breathed deep and bitter contempt of Cromwell's fair words. On the 3rd of August he rejoins—

[1] "You take upon you to judge us in the things of our God though you know us not—though in the things we have said unto you, in that which is entitled the Army's Declaration, we have spoken our hearts as in the sight of the Lord who hath tried us. And by your hard and subtle words you have begotten prejudice in those who do too much, in matters of conscience—wherein every soul is to answer for itself to God—depend upon you. So that some have already followed you, to the breathing out of their souls, (and) others continue still in the way wherein they are led by you, we fear, to their own ruin.

"And no marvel if you deal thus with us, when indeed you can find it in your hearts to conceal from your own people the papers we have sent you; who might thereby see and understand the bowels of our affection to them, especially to such among them as fear the Lord. Send as many of your Papers as you please amongst ours; they have free passage. I fear them not. What is of God in them, would it might be embraced and received!—One of them lately sent . . . hath begotten from them this enclosed *Answer*, which they desired me to send you: not a crafty, politic one, but a plain, simple, spiritual one;—what kind of one it is God knoweth, and God also will in due time make manifest."

He then assures them very quietly, that "we are not . . . afraid of your numbers. . . . We have given . . . some proof that thoughts of that kind prevail not upon us."

He beseeches them, "In the bowels of Christ, think

[1] Carlyle, Part vi. p. 167.

it possible you may be mistaken. . . . There may be a spiritual fulness, which the world may call drunkenness" (he is alluding now to their adherence to the letter of strict Presbyterianism). "There may be, as well, a carnal confidence upon misunderstood and misapplied precepts, which may be called spiritual drunkenness. There may be a *Covenant* made with Death and Hell!

"I will not say yours was so," he continues, reining in again his fiery words. "But judge if such things have a political aim: to avoid the overflowing scourge; or To accomplish worldly interests? And if therein we (you) have confederated with wicked and carnal men" (malignant Cavaliers!) "and have respect for them. . . . Whether this be a Covenant of God and spiritual? Bethink yourselves; we hope you do."

It was a strong case and argument, and among a large number of the strictest Covenanters it went home. How could "true religion" and the "Cause" of "godly men" be furthered and brought to a good issue by fighting the battle of a notoriously irreligious and carnal-minded young king, who, it was plain to the meanest capacity, merely submitted to the Kirk and Covenant because he needs must; but who, once on the throne of England, would snap his fingers at both, and pack them back over the Border faster than they came.

The Scottish Government, however, had gone too far to recede, and no Scottish minister was going to allow that a "sectary and blasphemer" had in argument any right or reason on his side, therefore the immediate results of Cromwell's declarations was only to bring recriminations and counter-declarations upon his head. Meanwhile David Leslie "stands steadily to his guns."

Matters indeed soon began to look very grim for the

English army. There was no food to be had anywhere, so carefully had Leslie stripped the country beforehand. The wretched inhabitants were even worse off than the English, who received supplies from their ships, and they were given by Cromwell "pease and wheat to the value of £240." A kindly and politic action to show that he had not come to oppress or harm the Scottish nation.

All through August, Cromwell, on the Pentland Hills, continued to try to induce Leslie to fight him, but without success. At last, finding that his men were dying fast of dysentery through the severity of the climate—the season being a very cold one—he retreated very slowly to Dunbar on the coast, where he could fortify himself, after a fashion, and go into winter quarters with the fleet at hand to supply him with food.

His condition was almost desperate. His men were falling sick "beyond imagination." The enemy, thanks to Leslie's excellent strategy, was always "in the fastnesses," and now, as the English retreated to Dunbar, followed them swiftly, and blocked up every pass to England. Truly, if ever a man seemed to have walked into a trap, Cromwell was that man. There were the ships; but in the first place the army could not have embarked in them; in the second place, even as regards food, when the winter weather set in they would be frequently unable to land provisions. Moreover, if in this extremity there should be a battle, the difference in numbers was now much greater than at first. At the lowest computation, after the "purge" of Malignants, Leslie's force numbered 20,000; Cromwell's only 10,500. The Scots, also, were confident and cheerful, in excellent fighting spirits; the English disheartened and

despondent, fearing the worst. They were weakened by disease, ill fed, unsheltered. They knew that their retreat to England was cut off, and they had little confidence in the power of their ships to aid them.

It is in such circumstances that one is able to gauge the nature of the man who is responsible for the crisis, and upon whom will fall the chief disgrace and misery of defeat and disaster.

Cromwell's attitude of mind in his extremity is brought vividly before us in his letter to Sir Arthur Haselrig, Governor of Newcastle. It was written on the 2nd of September, the day before Dunbar. No comment is needed. The fortitude, the faith in God, the confidence in himself and his army: the quiet, sure trust that all would work for the best, and was to be endured patiently as the will of God, together with the words of warning and counsel at the end, tell their own tale.

[1] "We are upon an engagement very difficult. The Enemy hath blocked up our way at the Pass at Copperspath, through which we cannot get without almost a miracle. He lieth so upon the hills that we know not how to come that way without great difficulty; and our lying here daily consumeth our men, who fall sick beyond imagination. . . . But the only wise God knows what is best. All shall work for Good. Our spirits are comfortable, praised be the Lord, though our present condition be as it is. And indeed we have much hope in the Lord; of whose mercy we have had large experience. . . .

"Indeed, do you get together what forces you can against them. Send to friends in the South to help with

[1] Carlyle, Part vi. Letter cxxxix. p. 179.

more, Let H. Vane know what I write. I would not make it public, lest danger should accrue thereby. You know what use to make hereof. Let me hear from you.

"I rest your servant,

"OLIVER CROMWELL."

A few hours after this letter was written Cromwell saw the famous movement of Leslie down the Doon Hill, towards the plain, which gave him the knowledge that, at last, the Scots were going to force a battle. That he then thanked God in his heart, if not aloud, as the old tradition has it, is probable enough. He did not know how ill disciplined were the Scots, but he had perfect confidence in his men.

What followed was that which must ever follow when a great captain, the greatest living master of military tactics, and wielding a force on which he can wholly rely, deals with an enemy that has only native courage and weight of numbers.

Bravely and well the Scots fought that day for the Covenant which had led them to their death. But with Lambert's cavalry attacking them in front, and Cromwell with three picked regiments of foot and one of horse on their flank, charging as only Cromwell's men led by Cromwell in person could charge, the Scottish horse, who were leading the attack, after one brave rally gave way, broke and fled in hopeless rout, crushing out of shape the infantry of the main body that was advancing to support them, and so preventing any hope of recovery.

Three thousand men were killed upon the field. Ten thousand laid down their arms and were admitted to quarter. The rest—with Leslie leading—fled where they might, a scattered band of hopeless fugitives. The Scottish army was destroyed.

The battle of Dunbar ended the struggle between English Puritanism and Scotch Presbyterianism—which had chosen to take up the quarrel of Charles for its own ends. Another campaign there was to be, Cromwell's labours were not ended yet, but the Covenanting party never really raised its head again.

It was a notable event, and great was the rejoicing of the English Parliament under whose authority Cromwell fought. Yet one wonders whether any of the Honourable Members, when hearing his letter with an account of the victory read in the House, took note of a sentence in it which, in the light of future events, stands out as a piece of significant advice intended by Cromwell to go home to all their hearts.

"We pray you own His people more and more. . . . Disown yourselves—but own your Authority; and improve it to curb the proud and the insolent such as would disturb the tranquillity of England, though under what specious pretences soever. Relieve the oppressed, hear the groans of poor prisoners in England. Be pleased to reform the abuses of all professions—and if there be any one that makes many poor to make a few rich—that suits not a Commonwealth."[1]

It did *not* go home to them, and abuses were *not* reformed. The few became richer: the many poorer. The Honourable Members of the House of Commons were "men of a little breed."

[1] Carlyle, Part vi. p. 193.

CHAPTER XXIII

It has been said that Cromwell's appeal and manifesto to the Scottish army had no immediate effect. They had not, however, been thrown away, but it required the defeat at Dunbar to drive his arguments home.

After Dunbar, all Scotsmen, even the sternest and most unbending of the Kirk ministers, knew in their hearts that one of two alternatives must be accepted. Either they must lay down their arms and make the best terms they could with English Puritans, or admit within their ranks not only the Malignants they had discarded, but all able to bear arms, who volunteered in the service. This last course the more deeply religious of the Covenanters refused to assent to. "I would rather join with Cromwell than with them," said one, his hand upon his sword. And though such a sentiment did not find favour with the majority of the Scots, it was echoed by many of their staunchest soldiers, hastened the inevitable lowering of the Standard of the Covenant, and prepared the way for the predominance of the purely Royalist character of the movement which was to be its ruin.

Towards this change in the Scottish army Charles and Cromwell, each for his own purposes, diligently laboured.

Charles saw in such a change the only way in which he could ever become a king in anything more than name, and free himself from the intolerable yoke of the Presbyters.

Cromwell trusted that in Scotland the "godly" would gradually lose interest and faith in a cause which to the most prejudiced minds must obviously tend more and more to purely "carnal" ends, and which, even if successful, would place the Kirk and Presbyterianism in a far worse position than under Puritan rule. While from his knowledge of the condition of feeling in England he was convinced that Charles without Presbyterianism at his back would have no following there worthy of the name.

Both men were right—and wrong. Charles had to learn that the Committee of the Estates were not men to be intimidated by one defeat, even though it were as complete as Dunbar, and that to gain his ends he would have to stoop to a deeper humiliation than had yet befallen him; while Cromwell, even as he had done in Ireland, miscalculated the strength and fervour of the Scottish national pride, and the prejudice against him as a "Sectary." Had he been a Scotsman, the Kirk might have found itself deserted by all its best and bravest men. Had he been a Presbyterian the ministers themselves might have been shaken in their allegiance to Charles. But he was an Englishman and an Independent.

The efforts of these two men, Charles and Cromwell, to make their positions good, formed the principal incidents of the Scotch campaign during the first six months after Dunbar.

No sooner did Charles hear of Dunbar, which, it is said, caused him the liveliest satisfaction, than he placed himself in communication with Royalist supporters in the Highlands; and finding that the Kirk still refused—a month after their defeat—to admit Malignants within the ranks of their army, he determined to make a dash for freedom by departing suddenly to the Highlands and

calling upon all loyal Scottish men, Covenanters or no, to rally round him. His scheme might have succeeded, but unluckily for himself he told Buckingham, who promptly betrayed him to the Committee of Estates. The result was that arrangements were made to "purge" even his personal retinue of doubtful advisers. Upon this, goaded by the severity of the restrictions upon his liberty and the insult to his friends, Charles made off on horseback, only accompanied by one or two attendants, to join his adherents in the mountains beyond Perth. He never reached them, however. The first long ride exhausted his physical stamina, and when overtaken the next day, he agreed to return to his former position. He did more. To curry favour again with the ministers he declared that "he had been deluded by wicked counsels . . ." and . . . "he trusted in God," that it would be a lesson to him for life. Later, when the Scotch Parliament met at Perth on the 27th of November, he reiterated in phrases more sanctimonious than ever his belief in the favour of God towards himself as a Covenanted King.

Meanwhile the composition of the Scottish forces was gradually changing. A national party was taking the place of a Kirk party in the Scotch Parliament, and there was a growing tendency in that quarter to accept all offers of assistance without making any inquiry into the beliefs or politics of the men who made them. In vain the Kirk party raved and stormed at "Malignancy" in every shape or form. It was left high and dry. The lay element in Scottish society was emancipating itself slowly but surely from the clerical domination it had endured so long.

In the last days of the year, Charles, who had now

become convinced that hypocrisy was, after all, the only policy to pursue in the circumstances, emptied to the dregs the cup of humiliation he had been drinking since his arrival in Scotland, by publicly pretending to acknowledge his own sins and the sins of his father and grandfather in having departed from the true Presbyterian faith.

This gave the Kirk the semblance of what they asked for; and on January the 1st, Charles was crowned at Scone with great pomp and ceremony. So well, indeed, did his Majesty act the lie to the end, that in the eyes of the ministers he "behaved so seriously and devoutly that none doubted of his ingenuity and sincerity." Yet these men were Scots! It is to be feared that by this time the most sincere Covenanter had salved his conscience to a make-believe compact with Charles rather than admit the truth of Cromwell's arguments. They had gone too far to turn back.

In this way Charles succeeded in commanding the "allegiance" of the men of Scotland. Cromwell, meanwhile, before he commenced an active campaign against what we may now term the Royal army, engaged himself in the unprofitable occupation of exhorting the Kirk to realise its error in taking Charles Stuart to its bosom, and making common cause with him against the English Puritans. So far as effecting any practical result the letters are without value; but they are far too characteristic to be passed over, and give us an insight into Cromwell's personal views upon the authority and prerogatives of ministers which is extremely interesting.

As early as the 9th of September, six days after Dunbar, Cromwell being in Edinburgh city, with the Kirk ministers shut up in the Castle, sent word through

Whalley, his Commissary-General, to the Governor of the Castle, that on Sunday the ministers "have free liberty granted them, if they please to take the pains, to preach in their several churches." [1]

The ministers refused on the ground that sufficient security was not offered to their persons, and intimated that the whole invasion was personal to themselves.

Cromwell, the same day, made prompt and pertinent rejoinder to the Governor.

[2] "The kindness offered to the ministers with you was done with ingenuity (ingenuously) thinking it might have met with the like: but I am satisfied to tell those with you, That if their Master's service (as they call it) were chiefly in their eye, imagination of suffering would not have caused such a return. . . .

"No man hath been troubled in England or Ireland for preaching the Gospel; nor has any Minister been molested in Scotland since the coming of the Army hither. The speaking truth becomes the Ministers of Christ!"

In a further letter the ministers aver that there have been ministerial persecutions, but they do not specify them. Cromwell, taking up the cudgels again, makes bold attack on the whole position of the Presbyters who "do assume to themselves to be the infallible expositors of the Covenant."

He is on familiar ground, and his language and arguments are delightfully Cromwellian.

"Where do you find in Scripture a ground to warrant such an assertion that Preaching is exclusively your function? . . ." [3]

"Approbation (ordination) is an act of conveniency in

[1] Carlyle, Part vi. p. 204. [2] *Ante*, p. 205. [3] *Ante*, p. 211.

respect of order: not of necessity, to give faculty to preach the Gospel. Your pretended fear lest Error should step in, is like the man who would keep all the wine out of the country lest men should be drunk. It will be found an unjust and unwise jealousy to deprive a man of his natural liberty upon a supposition he may abuse it. When he doth abuse it—judge. . . . Stop such a man's mouth by sound words which cannot be gainsaid. If he speak blasphemously, or to the disturbance of the public peace, let the Civil Magistrate punish him; if truly, rejoice in the truth. . . .

For a conclusion . . ." (here he drives home the lesson of Dunbar in his own characteristic fashion), "we could wish blindness hath not been upon your eyes to all these marvellous dispensations which God hath lately wrought in England. But did not you solemnly appeal and pray? Did not we do so too? And ought not you and we to think with fear and trembling, of the hand of the Great God in the mighty and strange appearance of His: instead of slightly calling it an "event"? Were not both your and our expectations renewed from time to time, whilst we waited upon God, to see which way He would manifest Himself upon our appeals? And shall we, after all these our prayers, fastings, tears, expectations and solemn appeals, call these bare "events"?—The Lord pity you."

The close of his letter is a series of questions, which the ministers refuse to answer. One of them it would have been very difficult to answer.

"Whether if your Reformation be so perfect and so spiritual, be indeed the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus, it will need such carnal policies, such fleshly mixtures, such insincere actings as—to pretend to cry down all Malig-

nants: and yet to receive and set up the Head of them, and to act for the Kingdom of Christ in his name, and upon advantage thereof? And to publish so false a Paper (Charles's declaration against his father's sins) . . . to deceive the minds of all the Godly in England, Ireland, and Scotland. You, in your own consciences, knowing with what regret he did it, and with what importunities and threats he was brought to do it, and how much to this very day he is against it? And whether this be not a high provocation of the Lord, in so grossly dissembling with Him and His people?" This is Cromwell's last word to the Presbyters. Soon afterwards, having proclaimed "by sound of trumpet and beat of drum" to all inhabitants of Leith and Edinburgh, that every one not bearing arms shall have full protection in following their usual occupations, he marched northwards to try to dislodge Charles from Stirling. He found the Scottish army too strongly posted, however, and Leslie was determined not to meet him on the plain; and as winter was now closing in he returned to Edinburgh and set about reducing the Castle. By December his batteries were ready for the storm, upon which, after negotiations, the garrison capitulated on good terms.

In the spring Cromwell's health showed signs of giving way, worn down with hard work and the severity of the climate, and probably the short commons before Dunbar. His constitution was indeed beginning to be seriously affected by these ten laborious years of constant mental strain, and campaigning of the roughest description.

"I assure thee," he wrote to his wife soon after Dunbar, "I grow an old man, and feel infirmities of age marvellously stealing upon me. Would my corruptions did as fast decrease."

He must indeed have had an iron physique to have endured so much. Active campaigning of any kind, when begun at forty years of age, would be a severe strain, but the campaigning of the seventeenth century during that war was worse than it is easy to realise to-day, especially for a man whose thoughts were fixed upon the business of the hour far more than on any creature-comforts. Against this may be placed the greater simplicity of everyday fare, and the comparative rudeness of a country gentleman's life of that period. Cromwell never complains of hardship. But it was his custom rarely to mention himself in his letters.

In March, after causing much anxiety to his friends, he rallied, but relapsed once or twice before the summer weather came.

He was now more than ever a hero at home. A medal, commemorative of Dunbar, was struck by Parliament, and his "effigy" placed on one side—though against his will.

"I do think I may truly say, it will be very thankfully acknowledged by me, if you will spare the having my effigies on it."

They do not spare him, however.

Another honour, the election of the Chancellorship of the University of Oxford, he accepted with gratitude; though very modestly.

[1] "I confess it was in your freedom to elect . . . only (though somewhat late) let me advise you of my unfitness to answer the ends of so great a Service and Obligation, with some things very obvious. . . . But

"The known esteem and honour of this place is such that I should wrong it and your favour very much, and

[1] Carlyle, Part vi. Letter clxvi. p. 257.

your freedom in choosing me, if, either by pretended modesty or in any unbenign way, I should dispute the acceptance of it. Only I hope it will not be imputed to me as a neglect towards you, that I cannot serve you in the measure I desire."

In April, as soon as Cromwell was well enough to mount a horse, the campaign in the north began again. It had not much result until July, when an engagement occurred between Lambert with three regiments of horse, and the same strength of foot, and nine regiments of Royalists, under Sir John Browne. The Puritans were completely successful; and Cromwell, his mind now full of a scheme to force matters to a final and decisive issue, passed northwards of Stirling with the whole of his army, and cut off further supplies to Charles from the Highlands. By doing this, he removed all obstacles to a march of the royal army southwards. The road to England was open.

By this time, the end of July, the dis-union between "Malignants" and Covenanters was at an end. Cavaliers and Presbyterians, Highlanders with claymores and bows and arrows, and Lowland musketeers, were all united in a national bond—pledged to place Charles at all hazards on the English throne. It was an unholy compact, brought about not by a foreign invasion—as the Kirk ministers chose to consider it—but by their own bigoted, narrow, and suicidal policy of attaching themselves and their Covenant to a hypocritical king. Had they chosen even at the eleventh hour to have spurned Charles, Cromwell would have left Scotland practically autonomous. The heel of the stern Independent soldiery would never have been placed on proud Presbyterian necks.

Cromwell's object was, if possible, to avoid having to

conquer Scotland; but at any cost, in self-defence, he was obliged to conquer Royalism there. The country chose to uphold Charles in spite of warnings without number. The country would now have to take the consequences.

On August the 2nd, Perth, which Cromwell was besieging, yielded. Before this he had heard that Charles, playing his last stake "to win or lose it all"—had broken up from Stirling, and marched directly upon England. Cromwell then carefully made all arrangements for garrisoning Perth, and turned southward to follow.

It used to be supposed once upon a time that Charles was clever enough to give Cromwell the slip. We know better now. It was Cromwell, on the contrary, who deliberately gave Charles the opportunity.[1] "Indeed this is our comfort," he wrote on the 4th of August to the Speaker of the Commons, "that . . . we have done to the best of our judgments, knowing that if some issue were not put to this Business, it would occasion another winter's war. . . . It may be supposed we might have kept the Enemy from this by interposing between him and England. Which truly I believe we might: but how to remove him out of this place without doing what we have done, unless we had had a commanding Army on both sides of the River of Forth, is not clear to us."

So they gave Charles his head, and he took the course expected of him.

It now remained to be seen whether Cromwell was right, or whether, as Charles confidently expected, he would be received with open arms by a population tired of sour Puritans, and ready to die for the son of the murdered "martyr."

[1] Carlyle, Part vi. Letter clxxx. p. 285.

The issue was not long left in doubt. The further Charles went the more difficult his position became. He stayed at the houses of his Catholic supporters, and this gave deep offence to the Presbyterians. Jealousies of every description arose, in addition to which his army of Scots was treated as a force of foreigners, and hated as such.

It is a grim commentary upon the adulation of the Restoration, and the sentimental shudderings at the "Regicides," which are felt to this day, and which some would have us believe animated the whole of the English nation for years after the "murder," that when on August 22, 1651, the Royal army entered Worcester, the reinforcements which joined it only amounted to a few hundred men.

As a matter of fact, the common sense of the English nation was so much on the Puritan side, the forethought of Cromwell and the speed with which Parliament followed his suggestions were so great, that had the Royalist army from Scotland been led by a very much better man than Charles, it would have been hopelessly outnumbered.

At Worcester Charles rested and hoped for something to turn up to his advantage.

On the 27th of August Cromwell reached Evesham at the head of 28,000 men, and proceeded methodically and thoroughly to surround the enemy—numbering 16,000—in such a manner that their escape might be an impossibility.

The battle which took place on the 3rd of September was desperate and bloody. The Scots fought with magnificent courage, and Charles led a spirited charge at the head of his cavalry. But against such odds, led by

Cromwell, there was nothing, and could be nothing, but defeat; and at the end of the day the Royalists would probably have been killed to a man, had not Cromwell, at the imminent risk to his life, ridden up to their lines, and offered them quarter.

With Worcester the war was over. The Royal Standard raised at Nottingham just nine years before was laid in the dust for the last time, and Puritanism had won its final and "crowning" triumph.

The execution of Charles I. had killed absolute monarchy in England. With Worcester all danger of foreign invasion was at an end, and the enemies of the Commonwealth annihilated. It was now to be seen what treatment the victors would receive at the hands of the Parliament in whose name Cromwell's last and most crushing victory was won.

CHAPTER XXIV

The battle of Worcester closed an important chapter in Cromwell's life. It was the last battle he ever fought. His career as a soldier had ended.

What, henceforth, was to be his position in the government of the Commonwealth?

Some of the shrewder men in Parliament doubtless pondered over this question with no little anxiety. He stood alone, not only as the greatest soldier of the Puritan cause, but as almost the only member of Parliament who had urged with emphasis the necessity of the House of Commons considering reforms, and pushing forward an active policy of settlement in the country.

He had made this clear in his letter after Dunbar, and long before in speeches before the second Civil War. Now in his letter to the Speaker from Worcester he put forward his views from a new standpoint, and more vigorously than ever.

[1] "I am bold humbly to beg, That all thoughts may tend to the promoting of His honour who hath wrought so great salvation; and that the fatness of these continued mercies may not occasion pride and wantonness, as formerly the like hath done to a chosen Nation; but that the fear of the Lord, even for His mercies, may keep an Authority and a People so prospered and blessed and witnessed unto, humble and faithful; and that justice and righteousness, mercy and truth may flow from you, as a thankful return to our gracious God."

[1] Carlyle, Part vi. p. 296.

"Justice and righteousness, mercy and truth."

These qualities Cromwell expected to be manifest in the government of English Puritanism. If they were, he would be its most devoted, loyal servant. But if they were not——

The warmest admirers of the Long Parliament, as it was in 1651, cannot find more to say for it than that its leaders, whatever their limitations or faults, were honestly anxious to labour for the best interest of the Commonwealth.

Unfortunately the reputation of a Parliament does not depend upon its leaders, and as the majority of the members after Worcester busily feathered their nests with the spoils of conquered Royalists, love of place and power would in their minds naturally dominate all other thoughts. This circumstance brought them into sharp and fatal collision with Cromwell, who, conservative as he was in his respect for properly constituted authorities, would never own as such any body of men who deliberately harmed the State or people to advance their private interests. It was not Cromwell's "ambition" but the corruptness of the "Rump" which was the cause of its ruin.

At present, and for many months, though domestic legislation on the part of Parliament, or the lack of it, never ceased to trouble the minds of Cromwell and the officers of the army, foreign affairs gave employment for all their energies.

In July 1652, after much futile negotiation, war was declared with the Dutch. The rights of the quarrel do not concern us here; but it is to be feared that England, who paid dearly for the contest, was more to blame than her adversary.

Cromwell, partly because the Dutch were Protestants,

strongly disapproved of the war; and though he was overruled temporarily, gave his powerful aid in bringing it to an end as soon as it had reached a stage at which peace became possible. This matter being in a fair way of settlement, he began to concentrate his mind and attention upon home affairs.

In the eyes of the nation, and in the eyes of the army, reforms of many kinds were needed, but that which must come first was the reform of Parliament.

The members of the present House of Commons had sat eleven years. They represented no one now but themselves, and for the most part had ceased to care very greatly for the affairs of the nation.

Though the best of them were uneasy and inclined to feel that something should be done, and were even ready to acknowledge that the present House, numbering less than two hundred members, did not adequately represent the nation, upon a suggestion that they should resign their seats, and allow writs to be issued for a fresh election, they drew back, and making common cause with those who were selfish and corrupt, presented an unbroken front against reform. The suggestion, however, unpalatable as it might be, was made by men who had not the least intention of being put down.

The officers of the army had taken up the cause of the people—the oppressed Royalists as well as discontented Puritans—and in the summer of 1652 began a bold and determined attack upon the Parliament. At first Cromwell took no part in the matter, though he let it be clearly understood that he sympathised with the main object of the campaign—a new Parliament. He even took some of the officers to task for impatience and stormy language. But while curbing their impetuosity he

did his utmost to rouse the members of Parliament to a sense of the false and dangerous position into which they had drifted. In fact, Cromwell acted as mediator between the extremists, as he had done on former occasions, and used all his influence and strength in endeavouring to reconcile the conflicting interests around him. By this course he again lost reputation and popularity. He turned first to one party and then to another, and asked each to produce a feasible plan, which, while ending the present deadlock, would be open to gradual development in the future, and pave the way to a permanent settlement. When he met with no satisfactory response, he refused to give his support to any party, whereupon all found fault with him. Cromwell's mediation was unsuccessful because no power on earth could reconcile the three factions into which the Commonwealth men had now split. The first of these was the Parliament. The leaders with their devotion to constitutional forms, the rank and file, from their extensive peculations, were determined one and all neither to resign their seats, nor allow their voting power to be swamped by the wholesale election of new members. Then came the moderate army men led by Lambert, who simply advocated the election of a new Parliament in a regular way, a Puritan policy to be secured by restrictions upon the return of Royalist members. Third, and lastly, there were the extreme men of the army, with Harrison as their leader, who wished to abolish Parliaments, and clamoured for a government by "Saints," to strike hard and swiftly at the corruption in the present administration, and find an immediate reform for every abuse and injustice under which the country groaned.

Between such widely differing policies there was a

wide gulf, which none of the parties would make any effort to lessen. But for Cromwell the matter would have been decided by the "longest sword" months before the memorable 20th of April 1653. Cromwell, however, for the time held back the army from forcible interference, and in September 1652 commenced a series of conferences at his house, which were attended by the leading Parliament men and the officers, and at which the matter was fully discussed in as friendly and calm a manner as the feelings of the men permitted.

"I believe," he said afterwards, "we had at least ten or twelve meetings."

Whether Cromwell ever expected to reconcile the irreconcilable is doubtful. It is more probable that his chief object in these conferences was to induce all who attended them to realise what they were about, and to ponder well before they finally adopted, and forced through, any revolutionary measure.

The main difference, concerning which no compromise ever came within sight at any conference, lay between the main body of the officers—Harrison and Lambert being united in this—who represented that the old Parliament must in one way or another cease to exercise supreme power, and between the members of the Commons who argued that this would endanger the stability of the State. When asked for a counter proposal the members hinted that a system of "partial elections" might be feasible—in other words, the appointment of new members to fill vacant seats, such appointments being in the hands of the present sitting members. This, as the officers foresaw, was tantamount to saying that come what would there should be no new Parliament at all—only the old one on a larger scale. They expressed their feelings in plain language.

At length in February 1652–3, the soldiers became so exasperated that they went to Cromwell and begged him to take the lead in dissolving the Parliament. But Cromwell recoiled at the thought.

"I am pushed on," he said to an officer, "by two parties to do that, the consideration of the issue whereof makes my hair to stand on end."

There is every reason to believe that this protest, supposed by some to be a piece of Satanic hypocrisy on his part, was perfectly genuine. Cromwell had not realised at this time that it would be necessary to dismiss the Parliament by force. He did not until the last moment dream of doing it himself. Nevertheless, there is every probability that he had been feeling for some time a very heavy sense of personal responsibility; and foresaw that in some form or other he would be obliged to take the helm of state into his own hands.

In November occurred a conversation between Cromwell and Bulstrode Whitelock, given by the latter in his journal. On this occasion Cromwell expressed himself freely about members of Parliament—with "their pride and self-seeking: engrossing all places of honour and profit to themselves and their friends: their delay of business and design to perpetuate themselves: their meddling in private matter between party and party contrary to the institution of Parliament, and their injustice and partiality in those matters, and the scandalous lives of some of the chief of them."

He then, probably carried away by the heat of his feelings, as his way was, went on to make remarks which caused poor Whitelock's hair "to stand on end."

"Unless," said Cromwell, "unless there be some authority, and power so full and so high as to restrain

and keep things in better order . . . it will be impossible in human reason to prevent our ruin."

Whitelock in answer expressed a pious hope that the members of Parliament would improve. But Cromwell's blood was up.

"Some course," he went on, "to curb and restrain them, or we shall be ruined by them."

To which Whitelock rejoined, or said he rejoined, that Parliament having been acknowledged by Cromwell and all the rest of the officers to be "the supreme power" and they having taken their commissions from it, "how to restrain or curb them (the members of Parliament) it will be hard to find out a way for it."

But this only roused Cromwell the more. A thought was in his mind and he brought it forth like the report of a pistol.

"What if a man should take upon him to be King?"

It would appear to be an indiscreet thing to say, but probably Cromwell had reason in saying it. Whitelock was a shrewd and candid man, and a reliable one in his way. The deadlock was awful. Some way out must be found. The lawyers, of whom Whitelock was one, were already murmuring at the difficulty of working English law without a king. Here was an idea, —let Whitelock follow it with a better if he could. Whitelock's reply was to suggest Charles the Second as "the man," a remark fatuous enough in face of existing facts. Cromwell naturally consulted Whitelock no more.

The fact which has to be realised is that no one but Cromwell saw the full significance of the situation; and even he did not yet see it clearly. The lawyers wished to go back to the old constitution of King, Lords, and

Commons. Harrison and the "Saints" wanted an entirely new one. Lambert would have been content with a fresh Parliament on the same lines as the present one. None guessed what Cromwell was seeing more clearly every hour:—that no Parliament, no system of government whatsoever, would lift the State out of the present *impasse* unless men who knew how to govern were to hold the reins of power.

The point was—where to find these men? There were none—not one—except himself. Had Hampden lived, had Sir John Eliot been spared, or men of such breed arisen to take their places, how different it might have been. But there were none. Cromwell stood alone, and he must have known it. And this being so it would be his duty, did opportunity offer, to take whatever step presented itself which would enable him to save his country and his cause from the distraction and ruin it was fast approaching in the hands of the present government.

Such a train of reasoning, which we believe to have been Cromwell's—extending over months of time, and qualified by much hesitation, and vain effort to find some other way—though it may prove him capable of supreme confidence in his own power, cannot fasten upon him the stigma of a man grasping at authority and position. He avoided it for long, trying to induce the men in power to govern well. He took it at last because they failed, and there were no others fit to take their places without his hand to guide them. He saw a State tottering to its fall for want of the strength which he alone possessed. Had he failed to take this burden upon his shoulders he would have been a traitor to his cause and to his country.

When the spring of 1653 came, events were fast

approaching a crisis. In March soldiers preached openly in churches and elsewhere, with the approval of the people, the doctrine that Parliament must be forcibly expelled. Only Cromwell dared to chide them for it. But even his authority was of no avail here.

"Rather," said one, "than we will suffer this Parliament to sit any longer we will bring in the Cavaliers and make a Parliament of them, whom we know have a great deal more honour and honesty than they."

"Our soldiers," said a newswriter, "resolve to have speedily a new Representative, and the Parliament resolve the contrary. The General (Cromwell) sticks close to the House, which causeth him to be daily railed on by the preaching party (Harrison's), who say they must have both a new Parliament and General before the work be done."

All of which proves that Cromwell was determined, come what might, that there should be no military anarchy.

From the Parliament side it is said that a few weeks before this Fairfax and Lambert were asked whether either of them would take Cromwell's place as commander-in-chief of the army were he dismissed. The members wanted, they said, a General who would "obey their orders, and not give them orders, as this one doth." This, it is stated, so disgusted Cromwell that he refused to attend the meetings of the House for a month.

On the 15th of April, however, he was in his place to make an eloquent protest against a Bill which the Parliamentary leaders were advocating. A Bill believed to be principally the creation of Sir Henry Vane. It was one for making into law the principle of "Partial Elections." The pith of it was that the present members

should retain their seats, and appoint a committee to choose out of the candidates for vacant seats those whom they thought most suitable. General Elections of Parliament were to be abolished. When the Bill was passed, Parliament was to adjourn for several months, the government of the country meanwhile to be carried on by a Council of State in which the Parliament men had a majority.

Cromwell pressed for a general election of members. But he was not supported, and in answer to his intimation that it was time for a new Parliament to sit, came the sharp retort that it was high time Parliament should choose a new General.

Upon this there was a scene, and so bitter had the feeling grown against Cromwell, because he had refused to identify himself with any party, that several officers joined hands with Marten and Vane; and even Harrison supported a proposal that Cromwell should be superseded. This roused Cromwell, and he instantly offered his resignation. No one, however, dared to take him at his word.

But it was the beginning of the end. Cromwell saw that unless some definite and decisive action were taken now, nothing but a revolution would purge the government of the men who were only capable of perpetuating themselves. He called his officers together, including Harrison and all malcontents, and laid before them a suggestion of his own: That they should persuade Parliament to appoint a body of "men, fearing God and of Approved Integrity" to govern temporarily until the country was sufficiently settled for a free general election to take place, the Parliament thus elected immediately taking from the temporary Council of State all the functions of the supreme power of the nation.

The suggestion was accepted readily by the officers. Their desire to overturn the present Parliament was so great that they were willing to agree to almost anything. Their alacrity therein is a sign of their relief to have Cromwell at last on their side. The consent of Parliament to drop the Partial Elections Bill had now to be obtained. To pave the way to this Cromwell invited both sides to confer with him at Whitehall.

This conference, however, proved as futile as all that had gone before. The Parliamentarians to a man were, of course, against such a proposal. The lawyers, with the exception of St. John, Cromwell's cousin, cried out for the maintenance of the present Parliamentary constitution at all costs. After many hours of discussion the soldiers began to lose their tempers, and were rebuked by Cromwell. At last, late at night, it was decided to postpone the discussion. In the meantime the members of Parliament gave assurance that the Bill for filling up vacancies should not be proceeded with.

The conference then broke up, intending to meet again the next day.

There is no evidence that any one then present knew what was going to happen some ten or twelve hours hence—least of all Cromwell himself.

CHAPTER XXV

On the morning of the 20th of April 1653, Cromwell did not go as usual to the House, but, dressed in "plain black clothes and grey worsted stockings," his customary indoor attire—an important bit of circumstantial evidence of his lack of foreknowledge of the coming scene—greeted the members of the late conference as they dropped in one by one to renew it. The majority of those present were officers. But a few Parliamentarians were there. Then came news that Parliament was sitting, upon which all the members of the House departed except Cromwell. To the surprise of these members they found that the Elections Bill, so obnoxious to the officers, was rapidly being made into law. In vain those against it raised their voices in protest and asked for delay. It soon became clear that the majority of the members were in a panic, and believed that their only safety lay in passing the Bill. It does not appear that the leaders urged this course, though naturally Cromwell afterwards held them responsible. More probable is it that the rank and file, who from their peculations with public funds had most reason to dread inquiry and loss of their seats, refused to be controlled, and that none of Cromwell's opponents had the moral courage and strength of mind to attempt to do it. When the handful of officers present saw what was happening they sent a messenger to Cromwell. The news that Parliament had broken faith with him and the officers roused Cromwell to a height of passionate

indignation which made him dismiss further thought of compromise from his mind. What respect or obedience did men deserve who broke their solemn word of honour treacherously, and forced on a measure, which if it became law would perpetuate this moribund Parliament and all its crying abuses; and, giving absolute power to the Presbyterian faction, bring back religious intolerance and the evils of the past?

The interests of the godly, nay, of all honest men, were in imminent peril. Cromwell hesitated no longer, but when a few minutes later he entered the House, a company of musketeers from his own regiment awaited his orders outside. He came, dressed in the plain indoor clothes, and quietly took his seat, and for a time listened to the debate. At length, when it became evident that the Bill was to pass, and that the Parliamentary leaders had broken their troth, he turned to Harrison—we may fancy the expression of his face—and whispered that Parliament *must* be dissolved. But Harrison, intrepid and fanatical as he was, quailed at the thought of putting down by force the "supreme power," and counselled more patience and delay. Thereupon Cromwell held himself under control, and sat still a little longer. A few more minutes passed. The last member who had anything to say sat down: the Speaker rose to put the question, "That this Bill do pass," when Cromwell beckoning again to Harrison, and whispering, "This is the time, I must do it," rose up, put off his hat and spake.

"At first and for a good while," say the old records, "he spake to the Commendation of the Parliament for their pains and care of the public good; but afterwards changed his style."

His feet would now be firmly planted; his head

thrown back; his face a deep angry red; his eyes dangerously gleaming; his voice harsh and resonant, rising higher and higher in tone till the old hall rang with it as he "told them of their injustice, delays of justice, self-interest, and other faults." At last a member, Sir Peter Wentworth, interrupted him.

"It is a strange language this within the halls of Parliament, and from a trusted servant—(emphasis perhaps on this word)—a servant whom we have so highly honoured, and we . . ." But he got no further.

Cromwell, in the full tide of his passion, waved him aside.

"Come, come," he cried, "I will put an end to your prating. You are no Parliament, I say. You are no Parliament. I will put an end to your sitting."

Then turning to Harrison he pointed to the door.

"Call them in, call them in." A hurried movement on the officer's part to obey orders; a moment of silence while the House sat expectant, astounded, paralysed, by such an outburst from one who had been hitherto so temperate; and then, with measured tread and stolid faces strode in the musketeers. At this, Sir Henry Vane, the real leader of the House, exclaimed with indignation—

"This is not honest. Yea, it is against morality and common honesty."

To which Cromwell replied in withering tones—for Vane had been one of those who had promised to delay the passing of the bill—"Oh, Sir Henry Vane, Sir Henry Vane! The Lord deliver me from Sir Henry Vane!"

He then called upon them all to be gone. The Speaker remaining in his place, Cromwell cried to Harrison, "Fetch him down," which Harrison courteously did.

When they all rose to go, Cromwell cast his eyes on the mace.

"What shall we do with this bauble?" he said to the captain of the company. "Here, take it away." As they trooped out in silence, he ended with almost an appeal in his voice—

"It's you that have forced me to do this. I have sought the Lord night and day, that He would rather slay me than put me upon the doing of this work."

At which one man ventured to reply—a certain Alderman Allen—that he might still undo that which he had done. Cromwell's answer was to remark that Allen was indebted to the State £700,000, and to order his arrest. He was released the next day. After all had gone, Cromwell took the Bill for Elections from the clerk, and having seen the doors locked, strode home to Whitehall.

In the afternoon he dismissed the Council of State, which he found sitting as usual, with the remark that this was no place for them, as Parliament was dissolved.

In such manner did Cromwell put an end to what had, at last, become a shameful counterfeit of a Parliament.

Whatever motives animated him, nothing but benefit could come of the breaking up of such a body. It had ceased, from any point of view, to justify its existence or its name.

Cromwell's position, after the dissolution of the "Rump," was a very peculiar one. It has been concluded that he there and then grasped all the reins of government and kept them, under the title of Protector, until his death. But this was not the case. It is perfectly true that no one but Cromwell could have dismissed the Commons in

so summary a way; and that had he immediately afterwards appealed to the army as a whole, and ultimately to the nation, to make him a personal sovereign, he might have succeeded in the design. But he did nothing of the kind. Not for a day did he attempt a *personal* government at all; but, calling a council of officers, laid before them the necessities and problems of the moment, and acted with their authority; never without. The notion that such men as these were his "creatures" is also erroneous. Some were members of Parliament: all were brave men of independent spirit, whose weakness lay in the direction of obstinate adherence to their own ideas rather than subserviency to another's, though that other were Cromwell. None ever sided with him against their convictions.

On the other hand, being soldiers, they all knew the importance of subordinating their particular aims in such a national crisis as the present, and rallying round the man who had done, at his own risk, that which they had all wished for so long, but without him had been powerless to effect.

At his suggestion, the day after Parliament ceased to sit, they formed themselves into a temporary Council of State, to guide the affairs of the country until such time as a new Parliament could be elected, and the constitution of the realm recast into a permanent form.

All proclamations and ordinances from this Council were issued in Cromwell's name; but it is important for us to remember that the opinions of the Council and not his own were formulated in these documents.

The best proof of the feebleness of the "Rump" was the indifference with which the English public of all classes looked upon its destruction. No one raised a

protest—"Not so much as the barking of a dog," as Cromwell afterwards remarks.[1] The magistrates, judges, and public functionaries of all kinds, gave notice of their willingness to serve under the new government, and were retained in their places. English life went on as usual through this and all other changes that followed. Peace was there—lasting peace. Law and order were upheld, not tampered with. Mistakes might be made—mistakes *were* made—by these men, plain soldiers once, who had now the herculean task before them of constructing the new state of affairs which was to supersede the old; but from the day the "Rump" Parliament disappeared the state of the country generally improved. Extortions from unfortunate "delinquent" Cavaliers ceased: men of all religious creeds, except the Episcopalians, began to enjoy greater liberty than ever before—though not to the extent Cromwell was personally disposed to allow. And if the Church—the Established Church—suffered still, it must be remembered that it was a political, as well as a religious body, which had been unfailingly "malignant" in its principles and practice.

The government of England by the Council of Officers lasted until the 4th of July following the dissolution of the Long Parliament. On that day a body of one hundred and twenty persons chosen by the Council to form the first Parliament of the Commonwealth, assembled in the Council Chamber at Whitehall. Each member had been summoned:—

"Then and there to take upon you the said Trust (the government of the Kingdom) unto which you are hereby called, and appointed to serve as a Member for the County of ——. And hereof you are not to fail."

[1] Carlyle, Part viii. p. 43.

One hundred and forty summonses were sent, and few of the persons who received them failed to appear. It was Cromwell's first and last attempt at choosing a Parliament, for the choice of the men, though not his own, was probably approved by him in the main. It was not a success. The problem of Parliamentary government, a difficult one at all times, was not one that Cromwell was destined to solve, though no one was more anxious to solve it. He made three attempts. The other two by election of the people. This, the non-elected one, was based on the conviction of the majority of his Council and himself that the best guarantee of good government for the nation was to choose incorruptible Puritans, zealous for religion, guiltless of party bias, and enemies to the death of peculation and all laws, however ancient, which tended to the "making of many poor to make a few rich."

They were excellent men those members of the "Little" or "Barebones" Parliament. "Godly, pious . . . of proved integrity." Men of the middle class mostly, representing in their high code of morals, pure lives, and sturdy independent contempt of rank and "vested interests" that portion of the nation which had most faithfully supported the policy that Cromwell had advocated from the beginning of his career.

These men, Cromwell, the first day of their sitting, addressed in a speech which must have lasted some hours.

It was a momentous occasion for him, and "standing by the window opposite to the middle of the table, and as many of the officers of the army as the room could well contain" around him, he delivered his soul upon the history of the war; the circumstances which had led to the Parliamentary crisis of April last; the reasons which

had caused him, in the name of his Council, to summon his hearers to this place; and, finally, the duties he expected and trusted they would perform.

The speech is far too long for verbatim quotation, but if the full significance of the course Cromwell pursued in future years is to be realised, and his weakness and his strength as Protector understood, it will be well to listen to some of the discourse as those men listened on that summer morning two hundred and forty-six years ago.

But we must try to realise the scene. Cromwell was in earnest. Neither "lies" nor "hypocrisy" were in his heart. He had done his duty, as he believed, and God had been on his side. He wished now to hand over what he had won—the freedom of the nation—to those who would know how to preserve and extend it. He had no intention of remaining in authority, "no, not for a day." Let but *this* Parliament do its duty by God and men, and he would be its "humble servant," as he had been to its predecessor until its behaviour had been such that he could serve it no longer. The men about him, or the majority of them, were ready to take him at his word. They listened sympathetically, with a resolve to be worthy of the ideal he conjured up. Alas, that this ideal was unattainable by these men, or any men, at that time.

[1] "Gentlemen," he began, "I suppose the summons that hath been instrumental to bring you hither gives you well to understand the occasion of your being here. Howbeit, I have something further to impart to you, which is an Instrument drawn up by the consent and advice of the principal officers of the army. . . . We have that here to tender you: and somewhat likewise to

[1] Carlyle, Part vii. p. 336.

say farther for our own exoneration,[1] which we hope may be somewhat farther for your satisfaction."

This is the introduction. He, then, warming to his work, enters into "that series of Providences wherein the Lord hath appeared, dispensing wonderful things to these Nations from the beginning of our Troubles to this day . . ."

How—"In this revolution of affairs, as the issue of these Successes which God has pleased to give to the Army, and the Authority that then stood, there were very great things brought about; . . . the bringing of offenders to justice, and the Greatest of them. Bringing of the State of this Government to the name (at least) of a Commonwealth. Searching and sifting of all persons and places. The King removed and brought to justice: and many great ones with him. The House of Peers laid aside. The House of Commons itself, the representation of the People of England, winnowed, sifted, and brought to a handful: as you very well remember.

"And truly God would not rest here. . . . So many Insurrections, Invasions, secret Designs, open and public Attempts, all quashed in so short a time. . . . Which, I hope, we shall never forget. . . . What God wrought in Ireland and Scotland you likewise know; until He had finished these Troubles . . . by His marvellous Salvation wrought at Worcester. . . . I say there is not any one of these things thus removed and reformed but hath an evident print of Providence set upon it, so that he who runs may read it. . . .

". . . I shall now begin a little to remind you of the passages that have been transacted since Worcester. Coming from whence, with the rest of my fellow Officers and

[1] Laying down of office with due form; *not* excuse.

Soldiers, we did expect . . . that the mercies God had shown, and the expectations which were upon our hearts, and upon the hearts of all good men, would have prompted those who were in Authority to do those good things which might, by honest men, have been judged fit for such a God, and worthy of such mercies."

He relates how the officers set to work to rouse Parliament to a sense of its duties.

"Indeed we may say that, ever since the coming up of myself and those Gentlemen who have been engaged in the military part, it hath been full in our hearts and thoughts, To desire and use all the fair and lawful means we could to have the Nation reap the fruit of all the blood and treasure that had been spent in this Cause. . . ." But . . . "We had no return at all for our satisfaction—a few words given us; the things presented by us, or the most of them, we were told, 'were under consideration'; and those not presented by us had very little or no consideration at all. Finding the People dissatisfied in every corner of the Nation, and laying at our doors the non-performance of these things which had been promised, and were of duty to be performed—truly we did then think ourselves concerned, if we would (as becomes honest men) keep up the reputation of honest men in the world."

So they conferred with Parliament, and at last dissolved it—though "the thinking of an act of violence was to us worse than any battle that ever we were in, or that could be, to the utmost hazard of our lives . . ."

[1] ". . . It remains now for me to acquaint you with what relates to your taking upon you this great Business," (we) "having done that we have done upon such ground of necessity as we have declared . . . to this end we

[1] Carlyle, Part vii. p. 348.

might manifest to the world the singleness of our hearts and our integrity who did these things, Not to grasp at the power ourselves, or keep it in military hands, no, not for a day; but . . to put it into the hands of Proper Persons that might be called from the several parts of the Nation. This necessity . . . hath been that that hath moved us to put You to this trouble, and having done that . . . we offer somewhat to you on the devolving of the burden upon your shoulders. . . . And although I seem to speak of that which may have the face and interpretation of a Charge" (good advice!) "it's a very humble one: and if he that means to be a Servant to you, who hath now called you to the exercise of the Supreme Authority, discharging what he conceives to be a duty toward you, we hope you will take it in good part."

Then follows a long, impassioned appeal into which Cromwell, when his heart was full and his hopes for the future strong and high, was wont to enter. To a modern audience the mere thought of sitting out such a discourse in July weather is appalling, We must remember that in those days sermons, prayers, and speeches were mostly long. What they asked for was that the speaker should have something to say. Cromwell did not disappoint them. Want of space, and that alone, forbids copious quotations from a speech which is full of fine thoughts and most earnest "counsel."

He implores them to "exercise the judgment of truth." . . . "Purity, impartiality, sincerity; these are the effects of 'Wisdom,' and these will help you execute the judgments of truth.

"Truly the 'judgment of truth,' it will lead you to be as just towards an Unbeliever as towards a believer, and

it is our duty to do so; . . . I had rather miscarry to a Believer than to an Unbeliever. . . .

"I beseech you . . . but I think I need not . . . have a care of the Whole Flock. Love the sheep, love the lambs; love all, tender all: cherish and countenance all, and all things that are good. And if the poorest Christian, the most mistaken Christian, shall desire to live peaceably and quietly under you—I say—let him be protected . . ."

He concludes by declaring the intentions of himself and his officers towards them.

". . . We shall be ready, in our stations, according as the Providence of God shall lead us, to be subservient to the work of God, and to that Authority" (themselves) "which we shall reckon God hath set over us.

". . . And having said this we shall trouble you no more. But if you will be pleased that this Instrument be read to you, which I have signed by the advice of the Council of Officers, we shall then leave you to your own thoughts and the guidance of God."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE "Instrument" Cromwell and his Council had drawn up and which was read at the close of his speech, was a statement to the Parliament concerning its powers. It provided that the "supreme authority" was to rest in the hands of Parliament from that date July 4, 1653, to November 3, 1654. Three months before the latter date, Parliament was to choose its successor, which was to sit for a year, and then make provision—the nature of which was not stated—for a future "succession in Government."

This, in bare outline, was the plan of Cromwell and his officers, for the government of England at the present time. It was a temporary expedient only, to pave the way for genuine "popular" government; in this he is explicit in his speech.

[1] "If it were a time to compare your standing with those that have been 'called' by the Suffrages of the People—which who can tell how soon God may fit the People for such a thing? None can desire it more than I! Would all were the Lord's People; as it was said, 'Would all the Lord's People were Prophets' (*i.e.* fitted to elect a right-minded Parliament!) I would all were fit to be called. It ought to be the longing of our hearts to see men brought to own the Interest of Jesus Christ. And give me leave to say: If I know anything in the world, what is there likelier to win the People to the in-

[1] Carlyle, Part vii. p. 355.

terest of Jesus Christ, to the love of Godliness (and therefore what stronger duty lies on you, being thus called) than an humble and godly conversation? So that they may see you love them; 'that' you lay yourselves out, time and spirits, for them! Is not this the likeliest way to bring them to their liberties?"

This Parliament, therefore, it was Cromwell's intention, was to be but a make-shift until the time when the people of England were in a fit condition to elect their own representatives. And, he thought, if the duties of government were performed "without partiality" but with "purity, impartiality, and sincerity," the day of government by a "free parliament" was not far off.

He was mistaken—not in his ideals, but in supposing that the instruments he had chosen were fitted to carry on the government of a nation, much less lay the foundation of a new one. The men had no Parliamentary experience, no tact, no knowledge of the subjects with which they had to deal. One example will show the condition of things. The evil that most required a remedy, was the condition of the Court of Chancery. This question, which was hedged in with countless difficulties, Parliament felt itself called upon to settle at once, without a practising lawyer in the House!

Yet had this Parliament been composed of experts upon every subject that came before it, the chances of its success would have been very small. Englishmen, even of those days, objected to be governed by a Parliament of "nominees"! Unpleasant people went about saying that these gentlemen were dummies, set up in their seats by Cromwell and his "satellites"—bound either to do his bidding—or to go. What right had one man to call a Parliament at all?

The reply to this was in Cromwell's speech. It had to be done, and there was no one else to do it.

Then, went on the objectors, why did he not appeal to the country? Because, he replied, the country in its present distracted condition was not in a fit condition to know its own mind. When it did, it should have a free elected Parliament fast enough. This also was a reasonable and cogent argument. But it had one serious defect in the eyes of the average man. How was anybody to be sure that Cromwell and that Council of his, and its chosen parliamentary nominees, were to be trusted to see for themselves when the country they had taken under their wing *was* fit to know its own mind? The only answer to this was to appeal to their trust in his good intentions. "I have done my best," he said in effect, "to put the power into good hands: I have not left it in my own. I have exhorted this Parliament to do its uttermost to serve you. I can do no more."

The Parliament sat: did its "uttermost"—and failed.

Yet it would be a great mistake to imagine that this Little Parliament was composed of Puritan fanatics, and ignorant demagogues, as Royalist accounts of it would lead us to suppose. Ludlow, a very unfavourable witness, and one who hated demagogues, says of it: "This Assembly, therefore, being composed for the most part of honest and well-meaning persons (who having good intentions were less ready to suspect the evil designs of others), thought themselves in full possession of the power and authority of the nation, and therefore proceeded to the making of laws relating to the publick."

The sting of this description lies in its tail. "*Thought* themselves in full possession of the power and authority." Ludlow was one of those who never forgave Cromwell for

dismissing the "Rump" Parliament. But there is nothing in the proceedings of the Little Parliament to justify a suspicion that Cromwell interfered with them. Indeed there is everything to show that while they remained in sitting he kept his word in spite of great pressure, and left them entirely alone. Had they gone to work after his fashion their fate would have been very different.

Throughout the whole course of Cromwell's career it was his policy, as it was his nature, to proceed slowly with reforms. The Little Parliament proceeded in desperate haste. A committee was appointed at once to reform the public treasury department; another to carry out reforms in the law; a third to deal with the question —a very vital one after civil war—of the best mode of providing for the needs of the very poor; a fourth to decide upon the maintenance of the ministry. This was the most serious of all, and required the most delicate handling. But it did not receive it. The members of the House were men of "Free Church" views. A strong party of them wished to abolish tithes on the spot; and even the most moderate only stipulated for some compensation to be given to the worst sufferers, by a small State provision for clergymen with large families.

The action of the Parliament with regard to this question, and the startling report that a proposal for the abolition of the Court of Chancery had been carried in a day, roused the country to serious alarm.

Reforms were urgently needed on all these questions, and if Parliament, as Cromwell would have done, had attacked one abuse at a time, and left all others alone until the first was disposed of, it might have effected much good. But this it was incapable of doing. The pendulum had swung too far.

While the "Rump" Parliament had brought itself into contempt by doing nothing, its successor awakened prejudice and apprehension in every quarter by attempting too much. It was the practice of its members to ask but one question of themselves—

"Is it God's will that these things should be?" When the anwer was "No," they said immediately, "Sweep them away!" and proceeded to do so forthwith.

No wonder a storm began to arise that caused Cromwell infinite anxiety and distress. Lawyers, clergy, every person, indeed, holding property of any description, felt unsafe under the power of such men.

A Parliament which enriched itself at the expense of the community, or one portion of it, was bad enough. A Parliament that imagined itself divinely appointed to reform everything of which it disapproved, and which did not hesitate to attack the most fundamental institutions of the realm, was unendurable.

All the misdoings of this Parliament recoiled upon Cromwell's head. He had created it; he was responsible for it. So reasoned city merchants, moderate Presbyterians, constitutional lawyers, and all the classes most affected by the ill-advised legislation. Even the army began to take alarm. In the midst of this confusion Cromwell stood erect and unshaken. But he was bitterly disappointed. On the 22nd of August—seven weeks after the opening of Parliament—he wrote to Fleetwood, then Deputy in Ireland: [1] "Truly I never more needed all helps from my Christian friends than now! Fain would I have my services accepted of the Saints, if the Lord will; but it is not so. Being of different judgments

[1] Carlyle, Part vii. p. 363.

and those of each sort seeking most to propagate their own, that spirit of kindness that is to them all is hardly accepted of any."

He alludes here not only to the indiscretions of Parliament, but the bitter recriminations which were going on between men of different opinions even in his own Council. Nevertheless, in spite of this heated condition of public feeling, and his own disapproval of their acts, he held loyally to his compact with the men he had placed in authority, and would not listen to the proposal of another military expulsion which was made by Lambert, and supported by the Moderates in Parliament among the officers.

Lambert's ideas seem to have gone much further than this. There are indications, which seem to us conclusive, that at this time, in November 1653, Lambert, after presiding at a large meeting of officers, formally proposed to Cromwell that he should become King. The grounds of this are given by Dr. Gardiner, and rest partly on the statement made by Cromwell nearly a year later, and partly in documents fitting in with all the evidence that has reached us.[1]

Here is Cromwell's own account of it:—

[2] "They told me that except I would take the government, they thought things would hardly come to a composure or settlement, but blood and confusion would break in upon us. I refused it again and again; not complimentingly, as they know, and as God knows."

The refusal is said to have so chagrined Lambert that he left London; and Harrison, who led the extreme party of "Saints," hoped again to have Cromwell's support. He

[1] Gardiner's "Commonwealth," vol. ii.
[2] Carlyle, Part viii. p. 47.

was mistaken. Cromwell, as usual, was seeking resolutely to find a middle course. On the one hand he saw, with Lambert, that a strong government was essential; on the other hand, he still hoped to fashion such a government out of the "godly" party; and shrank from holding the reins himself unless it was absolutely unavoidable. No one, however, knew this. His motives were misunderstood as they had always been. More than ever, now, was he credited with scheming and carving out his own greatness; with doggedly pushing his way to despotic power.

The "Saints" were quite as angry with him as the Moderates, though his hand alone saved them from being violently torn from their seats. The preachers stormed against him, and accused him freely of "assuming exorbitant power." He had invited them to a friendly conference. One of them, Freake, had unctiously begun his tirade by hoping that Cromwell's words and his own answer to them might be recorded in heaven. This was too much for Cromwell's equanimity.

"I did not expect," he retorted, "when I heard you begin with record in heaven, that you would have told such a lie upon earth!"

But the days of the Little Parliament were numbered. There was a strong Moderate party within it, which the feeling in the country was strengthening. On December 12, 1653, the members of this party proposed "that the sitting of this Parliament any longer as now constituted will not be for the good of the Commonwealth, and that therefore it is requisite to deliver up unto the Lord-General Cromwell the powers they have received from him."

There was not a full house when the motion was put,

but the majority were in favour of it, and, headed by the Speaker, went straight to Cromwell. The minority against it remained behind, and were drawing up a protest, when soldiers—not sent by Cromwell, but probably by Lambert on his own responsibility—ordered them to withdraw.

Cromwell expressed surprise at the request so suddenly tendered to him. Nor, though he may have known that some plot was brewing, is there any evidence that he was forewarned of what actual step was to be taken. After complaining of the burden they were laying upon him, he promised to use the power they resigned into his hands "to the protection of honest people."

Cromwell was now in a far more real sense than before Dictator to England. The position, and the responsibilities and cares of it, were thrust upon him by others. No action of his own, direct or indirect, toward gaining such a place as this, can be traced except by the assumptions of biographers and memoir-writers of the time, all of whom were interested from various motives in proving him to be a hypocrite and a tyrant.

How he decided it we all know. The position offered him he accepted fully and frankly. Not because he flattered himself that the nation by popular suffrage had elected him its Protector, Chief Magistrate, Governor, or King, by whatever name he might be called, then or afterwards; not even, perhaps, because he wholly trusted the motives of the men who begged him to be their leader, but because he felt that there was no way other than this for the country to be extricated from its manifold difficulties and distresses.

CHAPTER XXVII

Cromwell was installed "Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England and Scotland and Ireland" on December 16, 1654. This was only four days after the Little Parliament came to an end, the shortness of which interval gives colour to the supposition that the pressure exercised upon Cromwell to place himself at the head of the Government had been applied by Lambert and his supporters some time before, and that Cromwell had refused to yield until Parliament made the request on its own behalf.

This acceptance of the Protectorship was the final step Cromwell was to take in his career of public service to the nation. He could have taken another, three years afterwards, but he refused to do so, for reasons which we shall discuss in a later chapter. Had he become King the power he would have possessed during his lifetime could scarcely have been greater than it was, and the number of his enemies, if lessened in one quarter, would have increased in another. To Royalists he would still have been a "base-born usurper"; in the minds of Republicans he would have sunk to an even greater depth of infamy, while it would have taken very many years for the general public to recognise his title to hereditary monarchy.

We may therefore pause at this point to consider Cromwell in the light in which he was now to appear to the nation henceforth, "Lord Protector of the Commonwealth."

First, for a glimpse of the outward man. A little sketch by his greatest biographer will help us here :—

[1] "His Highness was in a rich but plain suit: black velvet, with cloak of the same: about his hat a broad band of gold. Does the reader see him? A rather likely figure, I think. Stands some five feet ten or more; a man of strength, solid stature, and dignified, now partly military carriage; the expression of him valour and devout intelligence—energy and delicacy on a basis of simplicity. Fifty-four years old, gone April last; ruddy-fair complexion, bronzed by toils and age; light-brown hair and moustache are getting streaked with grey. A figure of sufficient impressiveness; not lovely to the man-milliner species, nor pretending to be so. Massive stature; big massive head, of some leonine aspect. Wart above the right eyebrow; nose of considerable blunt-aquiline proportions; strict yet copious lips, full of all tremulous sensibilities, and also, if need were, of all fierceness and rigours; deep loving eyes, call them grave, call them stern, looking from under those craggy brows, as if in lifelong sorrow, and yet not thinking it sorrow, thinking it only labour and endeavour:—in the whole a right noble lion-face and hero-face, and to me royal enough."

But what lay behind the "lion-face"? When we read the memoirs, journals, biographies, written concerning him by the men of his time, we receive only one impression, namely, that Cromwell was one of the most detestable of human beings. A schemer and a despot, he was a man whose only god was lust of power, and who, to pander to this lust, persecuted his enemies, sacrificed his friends, and oppressed with iron hand a

[1] Carlyle, Part vii. p. 370.

groaning nation. However widely opinions differed concerning his character before he became Protector—and there is a remarkable difference on this point among his contemporaries—they became unanimous as soon as he grasped the helm of State. The student of Cromwell, in short, is met with a storm of the severest strictures ever passed upon a public man. Yet when that student turns from these scathing indictments to study the occurrences of the time, and the acts of which this unspeakable "usurper and tyrant" was really guilty; and, most important of all, to consider the motives of the men who wrote about him, and how much, even when they were honest critics, they really knew—a suspicion begins to germinate in his mind, growing rapidly as he reads, that to base any judgment of Oliver's character upon these writings would be most unwise. There is hardly one of these memoirs that is not written by a political opponent, or at the best by some one with a grievance, real or fancied, against the Protectorate, and therefore seeing all that Cromwell did with a prejudiced eye.

When after studying, comparing, and analysing these accounts the student examines the record of facts—not opinions—and last, but not least, takes note of Cromwell's own utterances, the question begins to assume a new aspect.

In reality there was complete harmony between the Protector at Whitehall, the Lieutenant-General on the battlefield, and the old-time member of the Long Parliament.

Cromwell was still, as he had ever been, strenuous and peremptory when his mind was made up; but, until quite sure that he was right, patient, tolerant, and long-suffering. His soul was full of high ideals, generous

thought, and pure intention, though in action he appeared cruel, and his policy harsh and mistaken. When Protector he was forbearing and magnanimous to all who abused him, or attacked his person in print, or by violence; but toward those who dared to lay a finger upon that which he conceived God and the people had given him, he was as inexorable as he had been with the Levellers and mutineers in former days, when he drew his sword upon the regiment at Corkbush field.

The cause of the most virulent and damaging attacks upon Cromwell, however, was the unbending sternness and resolution with which he upheld the government of the Protectorate, and, in especial, his own place there as virtual sovereign of the land. Ludlow, Mrs. Hutchinson, and a score of the chroniclers of the time—old comrades and tried friends of Cromwell in previous days—all lay stress upon that, and put it down to his overweening arrogance and love of absolute power. For the sake of power, they say in effect, he destroyed all the benefits which their combined struggles had won for the English people, and locked the land as in a vice between the jaws of a sterner, more arbitrary rule than that of the Stuarts had ever been.

It is no answer to this accusation to say that he used his power well on the whole, and that the punishments he inflicted upon those who rebelled were as light as circumstances allowed. The fact remains, they argue, that he did assume despotic power; and loved his place more, infinitely more, than the liberties of England which he had sworn to maintain.

This indictment nearly concerns any estimate of Cromwell's character. Upon the answer to it depends the justification, or the reverse, of his principal acts

when Protector of the Commonwealth. We must therefore examine the question closely.

It is apparently founded on two suppositions, very current at the time. The first, that by the law of the sword which he and his officers had set up in the land, he made himself a ruler of almost absolute power. The second, that his motives for refusing to allow his authority to be called into question were radically selfish and sordid.

To form an opinion on the first of these points, it is necessary to examine in detail the provisions of his "Instrument of Government," which Lambert and other officers drew up without Cromwell's assistance, in December 1654; and which Instrument Cromwell strictly bound himself to observe in its entirety.

The government of the kingdom was to rest on "A single person and a Parliament." The "person" was to be called Protector, and to be elected for life by the Council of State. This Council was not to number less than thirteen, or more than twenty-one, members. Fifteen were named in the Instrument, the rest to be elected by Parliament. The Councillors once elected, were to remain in power for life, unless they were proved to be guilty of corruption. The Parliament, the first of which was to begin its sitting on September 3, 1655, was to be elected by the people, every one possessing real estate or personal estate to the amount of £200 being entitled to a vote. Every law made by Parliament was to be sent up for approval by the Protector, and if vetoed could be returned to the House for reconsideration; and if, in spite of his objections, the Parliament desired the measure to pass, it became law in twenty days without his sanction. Proclamations, commissions, &c., ran in

the Protector's name, but he must get the sanction of his Council before sending them forth. The highest posts in the State, however—after the Protectorship—were only to be filled with sanction of Parliament: such as Keeper of the Great Seal, Treasurer, Admiral, the Chief Governors of Ireland and Scotland, and the Lord Chief-Justice.

It will at once be seen that the "supreme authority" in the nation was not the "Protector," but the Council of State and Parliament. The Council in adminstrative powers; the Parliament in making new laws and reforming of old ones. The argument that Cromwell was really the Council will not stand. These men were fearless, determined soldiers, and experienced politicians. Some of them only acknowledged Cromwell as their leader because of his commanding influence in the army. Few, or none, followed him blindly. One at least, Lambert, is strongly suspected of having been personally jealous of him; and probably Lambert did not stand alone. That Cromwell's was the master-mind, and that when he believed any measure absolutely vital to the safety of the State he was able to induce a majority of his Council to support him, is no doubt true. But he dared not push his authority too far. Nor must the personal responsibility which Cromwell in his speeches assumed for all acts of the Council lead us astray. Having once accepted the position of representative and mouthpiece of the Council, it would have been utterly unlike Cromwell to give the least hint outside of any division of opinion that might have occurred within. Besides which, he was convinced that upon a firm union between himself and his advisers depended the security of the State.

With regard to the policy pursued by Cromwell and

his Council, the main features of which have been bitterly assailed by his contemporaries, Royalist and Republican alike, it is hardly possible at this distance of time for a sound and accurate judgment to be formed. Certainly some of their measures appear unduly harsh and arbitrary, especially the appointment of the Major-Generals. Others, such as the suppression of horse-racing, cock-fighting, and May-pole festivities, seem distinctly foolish as well as cruel. But are we not apt to underrate the peculiar conditions of the time? Do we know, as Cromwell and the Council knew, what hidden dangers to the public peace lurked beneath apparently harmless amusements: the state of chronic conspiracy against the State in which the gentry throughout the country districts lived at this time? After the Civil War, the law of the land had become so much weakened, and men were so poor and miserable, that there were thousands of needy persons wandering about desperate enough to commit any deed, or take part in any rising, if there was money to be got by it—or a possibility of better times. These people, with the Cavaliers, who, beaten or not, still formed a very large proportion of the population, especially in the country, were a continual danger and worry to the Protectorate government. Cromwell's remedy, after much consideration, was the famous and much execrated appointment of the Major-Generals. The business of these men was to "look after the good of the Commonwealth" by watching all suspicious characters, and levying tax of ten per cent. from the income of all known Royalists whose income was above £100 per annum, or whose personal estate exceeded £1500. Each General had a district—there were twelve in all—and could appoint deputies. He was an officer of the army, carefully chosen.

Such a measure was certain to be intensely unpopular, and, unless justified by an exceptional amount of danger to the State, was suicidal. It was dropped two years later, which is pointed out as proof positive of its fatuity. But Cromwell never acknowledged that it was a mistaken measure, as in other cases he was always ready to do. This may have been partly because he was growing callous to the necessity—so hateful at first—of using force to compel peace and submission to his authority; but it is at least as probable that the danger of continual risings, and the stirring up of strife in the country districts, unless a heavy hand were laid on it, was greater than we know; and that the Royalists gave him far severer provocation than has ever been placed on record. It must not be forgotten that all our information has come from the men, or the descendants of the men, who were never convinced of the right of the Protectorate government to receive any obedience or loyalty at all.

The principle of Cromwell's domestic government was simple enough. Order and obedience first from every one; penalties without respect of persons for all who refused allegiance. Then good laws and just and liberal treatment on every side. The public services were cleansed of corruption: legal procedure simplified: the Established ministry reformed on what, for the time, was a broad tolerant basis. During the Protectorate the Universities flourished as they never had done under Stuart rule, and did not again; and men of learning were encouraged and assisted. The Jews were allowed to settle in London; and there is little doubt that had Cromwell lived longer even the Roman Catholics would have been gradually eased of some of their worst disabilities.

The Catholics and the Episcopalians, however, suffered severely at this time. This was not from any fanatical hatred of Cromwell's against their faith. It was chiefly a political question. From Catholics and clergymen of the Episcopalian churches the Stuarts had received more support than from any other class in the community. Rightly or wrongly, therefore, Cromwell, being forced to the conclusion that these men from the tenets of their religions or political faith were enemies to the State, showed them no mercy, and from them, naturally enough, have come the loudest and most bitter abuse of the Protector.

In his foreign policy Cromwell has, however, been treated more leniently by his critics than he deserved. Few have failed to find a word of praise: many are willing to allow him unqualified credit. It is to be feared, however, that the foreign policy of the Protectorate was not an enlightened one. In the main its successes were achieved through the weakness of Continental nations, and the struggle for ascendency between France and Spain, which induced both of these States to be eager for an alliance with England, and lastly, through the excellence of the English navy.

When soldiers command the destinies of a nation naturally warlike, and never too tender in its consideration of the rights of foreigners, and when these rulers possess an army out of employment, as well as the finest navy in the world, they are apt to look upon conquest as a natural right.

That this was at the bottom of Cromwell's eagerness to find a pretext for a war with Spain, and the main cause of the secret expedition to the West Indies in 1665, is hardly to be doubted. He hated the Inquisition, it

is true, and his blood boiled with honest indignation at the atrocities which the Spaniards had committed from time to time upon Englishmen; but this could not alone justify the course of action which was adopted towards Spain. Gardiner puts the question cogently enough.

[1] "If Oliver had clearly put forward his complaints at Madrid, and, after insisting on an acknowledgment limiting the Spanish dominion to territory occupied by Spaniards, had declared war upon receiving a negative answer, no one could have reasonably blamed him. What he did was to avoid making any positive demand accompanied by a threat of war, whilst he prepared a secret expedition to snap up Spanish colonies without any preliminary declaration of war, and without any hint that he intended to break the peace."

It never seemed to occur to Cromwell that if he could ensure protection to British citizens abroad, and maintain an attitude of firm neutrality, he would do far more good to England in the end than by any war however successful. Nor did he appear to perceive that it was not maintaining a high standard of international morality to attack the Spanish possessions in the West Indies before declaring war. It would appear, from his speeches,[2] as if he had imbibed the old spirit of Elizabethan adventure in the Spanish main, and persuaded himself that "Spain was the natural enemy of England."

With France he remained at peace, and though the peace made with the Dutch was marred by the secret clause with Holland, to exclude the Prince of Orange as ruler, it was better than the fratricidal war

[1] Cromwell's Place in History, pp. 93–94.
[2] Carlyle, Part ix. p. 161.

which Cromwell had inherited from the Long Parliament.

In all these questions, however, foreign and domestic, the Council of State had the casting vote, and used it unsparingly.

Cromwell was not, by the "Instrument of Government," nor was he in practice, the absolute ruler of England.

CHAPTER XXVIII

We have next to consider the second supposition upon which Cromwell's opponents based their severest criticisms, namely, that he was animated in all he did by mean personal motives. One of the greatest of his foreign biographers, M. Guizot, though freely acknowledging the Protector's genius, can see little, even in his most beneficent measures, but selfishness.[1]

This charge is a very sweeping one, only to be justified by the strongest and most unanswerable evidence—evidence which it does not appear to us Cromwell's critics have ever produced. Guizot's manner of arriving at a judgment of Cromwell's motives and private life was to quote copiously from the writings of all Cromwell's political enemies, and to rake up choice bits of reputed scandal which Royalist lampooners and the court gossips retailed to one another, or wrote afterwards for his gracious Majesty Charles II. This method has been pursued *ad nauseam* by others. None seem to have thought it worth while to seriously study Cromwell's own utterances, in which he states in the clearest manner why he became Protector, and what it meant to him.

It may, of course, be argued, that these are the words of a canting humbug. Those, however, who take such a view of Cromwell's speeches to his Parliament put themselves out of court at once.

The strength which enabled Cromwell, though one of

[1] Guizot, vol. ii. p. 166.

the worst-hated men of his time, to hold the first place in England, came from the sincerity and reality of his convictions. Without this, all his sagacity would have been of no avail. He *believed*, therefore he struck without fear, and without misgiving; patiently endured the enmity and misunderstanding of friends as well as foes, and never swerved an inch from the course which he marked out for himself. All this was done with a force, a consistency of purpose, and tireless vigilance, which brought to nothing all the plots against him, and held him scatheless to the end.

What, then, was the belief of this man—what was the purpose in his mind—when he became Protector? It is this that we must probe to the root if we would know Oliver Cromwell as he really was, and not as he is generally painted.

And we can probe it if we choose. Read the speeches to the first Protectorate Parliament, read them with full knowledge of what the man who spoke had been, and all that he had done. And as you read remember that in the letters, gathered together by Carlyle, many of them dealing with incidents that only a very truthful mind would describe accurately, there is not one falsehood to be found, hardly even an exaggeration.

These speeches, couched though they often are in a cumbrous, obsolete dialect, interlarded with expressions that to modern ears are grotesque, sometimes almost without meaning, nevertheless ring true. They came from the speaker's heart—from the heart of one who knew that in his hands, and in the hands of his Council, lay the fate of England. Every sentence shows that he realised this to the bottom of his soul, and meant that if it lay within his power all other men should realise it,

and realise also how he intended to fulfil the trust that had been laid upon him.

With this conviction, we give a few extracts from the speeches to the first Protectorate Parliament.

They are far from being the utterances of a perfect man; or of one who perfectly grasped the task he had set before himself—the task of convincing men, bitterly prejudiced against him and his assumption of authority, that this authority was a natural outcome of past difficulties and an inevitable, indisputable fact. But no better evidence of what Cromwell really meant by all that he did and caused to be done can, we believe, be given than his own spoken words.

He began his speech to the first Protectorate Parliament, which had been elected as the "Instrument of Government" directed, and which met on September 3, 1655, by reminding them that in their hands and his own lay the fate, not only of England, but "of all the Christian People in the World."[1]

Then, to show them that it was not his intention to soar into high flights of rhetoric, but to tell them what he conceived to be plain and sober facts, he went on:—

"In the way and manner of my speaking to you, I shall study plainness; and to speak to you what is truth, and what is upon my heart, and what will in some measure reach to these great concernments."

With which introduction, after one reminder of God's "providences and dispensations," he went straight to his point.

"What I judge to be the end of your meeting—the great end—to wit, Healing and Settling. The remem-

[1] Carlyle, Part viii. Speech ii. p. 18.

bering of Transactions too particularly, perhaps, instead of healing—at least in the hearts of many of you—might set the wound fresh a-bleeding. I must profess this unto you, whatever thoughts pass upon me, That if this day, if this meeting, prove *not* healing, what shall we do!"

To substantiate this argument, which he probably foresaw would not be as obvious to the members of Parliament as to himself, he gave a picture of the condition of affairs to which the fanatical party in the Little Parliament, against whom he had definitely set his face, were hurrying the nation until the establishment of the Protectorate in the previous December.

". . . Was not everything almost grown Arbitrary? . . . What was the face that was upon our affairs as to the Interest of the Nation? As to the Authority in the Nation; to the Magistracy; to the Ranks and orders of men—whereby England hath been known for hundreds of years? A nobleman, a gentleman, a yeoman; that is a good interest of the Nation, and a great one!

"The Magistracy of the Nation, was it not almost trampled under foot, under despite and contempt, by men of Levelling principles? I beseeeh you, For the orders of men, and ranks of men, did not the Levelling principle tend to the reducing of all to an equality? . . . What was the purport of it, but to make the Tenant as liberal a fortune as the Landlord? Which I think if obtained would not have lasted long! The men of that principle, after they had served their own turns, would *then* have cried up property and interest fast enough!"

In this manner Cromwell showed the conservative side of his character, and tried to convince these serious Puritans with a stake in the country—from which class

this Parliament came—of the urgency of setting prudently about the work of reform.

He next disowns any sympathy with the wild forms of religious license becoming very rife at that time.

"Liberty of Conscience, and Liberty of the Subject—two as glorious things to be contended for as any that God hath given us; yet both these abused for the patronising of Villainies!"

But he is careful not to let any one think he would countenance intolerance, any more than he had done of old.

"I wish it may not be too justly said, That there was severity and sharpness (in our old system). Yea, too much of an imposing spirit in matters of conscience; a spirit Unchristian enough in any times, most unfit for these—denying liberty to men who have earned it with their blood, who have earned civil liberty, and religious also, for those who would thus impose upon them." The old Cromwell spoke out there!

He deals next with the Fifth Monarchy men, and their extravagant notions, and though he condemns, yet he has a kindly word for them.

"Nevertheless, as many of these men have good meanings . . . it will be the wisdom of all knowing and experienced Christians to . . . 'have compassion, making a difference; others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.'"

After this he gives a brief sketch of the late danger of a war with France, the war with the Dutch and the Portuguese, and the dangers of fresh rebellions in Scotland, the consequent leanness of the purse of the nation, and the necessity of a "remedy."

"A remedy hath been applied: that hath been this

Government—a thing I shall say little unto. The thing is open and visible to be seen and read of all men; and therefore let it speak for itself."

He is now upon the "Instrument" of Government under which he, the Council, and Parliament are to govern the land. From this he proceeds to touch upon certain things which the Government—meaning the Council since the ending of the Little Parliament—had done. Reform of Chancery Law; Commission of "Triers" —men empowered to reject "scandalous ministers" from livings, and "promote" good ones, without distinction of creed; and thirdly—

"One more thing this Government hath done: it hath been instrumental to call a free Parliament—which, blessed be God, we see here this day. I say a free Parliament. And that it may continue so, I hope is in the heart and spirit of every good man in England—save such discontented persons as I have formerly mentioned. It's that which as I have desired above my life, so I shall desire to keep it above my life."

After which he runs through the results of the foreign policy of the Council, and the work that it still to be done. He concludes by a few simple manly words.

"Having said this, and perhaps omitted many other material things through the frailty of my memory, I shall exercise plainness and frankness with you; and say, that I have not spoken these things as one who assumes to himself dominion over you, but as one who doth resolve to be a fellow-servant with you to the interest of these great affairs, and of the People of these Nations."

Such was Cromwell's first speech to his first "free" Parliament. As to his spirit and intention toward the Parliament—expressed by his words—no comment is

needed. He wished it success. He "did resolve to be a fellow-servant." It was the Parliament that would not have it so. They did not apply themselves to reforms of law, or to maintaining the finances of the country in a proper condition, but fell to disputing whether the "Instrument of Government" as established by the officers was satisfactory. It was not unnatural that men whose only conception of a "Parliament" was that the House of Commons alone should hold the "Supreme Authority" of the State, should strenuously object to sharing it with a Council, the majority of which they could not remove. Such a provision, they felt, was a direct blow at their just prerogatives. A "Free Parliament" indeed! The term was a mockery. So, after electing a Speaker, they settled down to amend the "Instrument."

This brought them into direct conflict with Cromwell and the Council. The officers thought they had made far-reaching concessions to popular government. More they could not do in the present state of the country. The Parliament ought not, they thought, to have asked them to do more, and those who insisted that it should be done, were not fit to be members of Parliament at all.

In such circumstances, action of the promptest kind had to be taken. For eight days Parliament met and debated "from eight in the morning till eight at night, with an hour for refreshment about noon"—and then on Tuesday, 12th of September, the members were summoned to give an account of themselves.

In the speech Cromwell made that day, it was his object to prove that the Protectorate was not set up because he desired to grasp at arbitrary power, but that it came into being through failure of Parliament to manage unaided a nation's affairs, and that this being so, he could

be no party to going back to the former confusion. In short, that he became Protector because there was no other way of saving the nation from anarchy and bloodshed; and that while he lived he would remain Protector for the same reason. Again, it must be said with emphasis, Cromwell spoke from his heart, and desired with all his soul to convince others by argument and reasoning, and not be reduced to using force.

[1] "At our former meeting I did acquaint you what was the first rise of this Government, which hath called you hither, and by the authority of which you have come hither. Among other things . . . I said, You were a Free Parliament. And so you are,—whilst you own this government and authority which called you hither. But certainly that word" (Free Parliament) "implied a reciprocity, or it implied nothing at all! Indeed, there was a reciprocity implied and expressed; and I think your actions and carriages ought to be suitable! But I see it will be necessary for me now a little to magnify my Office. Which I have not been apt to do. I have been of this mind, I have been always of this mind, since I first entered upon my Office. If God will not bear it up, let it sink."

". . . I called not myself to this place—I say again, I called not myself to this place! Of that God is witness. . . .

But "being in it . . . If my calling be from God, and my testimony from the People, God and the People shall take it from me, else I will not part with it. I should be false to the trust that God hath placed in me, and to the interest of the People of these Nations, if I did. . . ."

"I was by birth a Gentleman; living neither in any

[1] Carlyle, Part viii. p. 40.

considerable height, nor yet in obscurity. I have been called to several employments in the Nation . . . not to be over-tedious, I did endeavour to discharge the duty of an honest man in those services.

". . . After Worcester fight, I came up to London to pay my service and duty to the Parliament which then sat: hoping that all minds would have been disposed to answer what seemed to be the mind of God, namely: To give peace and rest to His People, and especially to those who had bled more than others in the carrying on of the Military affairs—I was much disappointed of my expectation.

". . . I can say, in the simplicity of my my soul, I love not, I love not—I declined it in my former speech—I say I love not to rake into sores, or to discover nakedness! . . ."

He passes over in a few words the deadlock of the "Rump."

"Truly I confess—upon these grounds, and with the satisfaction of divers other persons who saw nothing could be had otherwise,—that Parliament was dissolved: and we, desiring to see if a few might have been called together for some short time who might put the Nation into some way of certain settlement,—did call those Gentleman (the Little Parliament) out of the several parts of the Nation. . . .

"And . . . I say, As a principal end in calling that Assembly was the settlement of the Nation, so a chief end to myself was to lay down the Power which was in my hands. I say to you again, in the Presence of that God who hath blessed, and been with me in all my adversities and successes: That was, as to myself, my greatest end! . . .

". . . What the event and issue of that Meeting was, we may sadly remember. It hath much teaching in it, and I hope you will make us all wiser for the future! . . ."

He then describes the resignation of the Little Parliament, and emphasises the fact that this again placed supreme power in his own hands. Then states how his officers, having framed (without his knowledge) the Instrument of Government, came to him.

"They told me that except I would undertake the Government, they thought things would hardly come to a composure or settlement, but blood and confusion would break in upon us. I refused it again and again . . ." (see page 269), "but . . . I confess, after many arguments, they urging on me, 'That I did not hereby receive anything which put me into a *higher* capacity than before; but that it *limited* me; that it bound my hands to act nothing without the consent of a Council, until the Parliament, and then limited by the Parliament, as the Act of Government expresseth.' . . . I did accept it. . . . I did at the entreaty of divers Persons of Honour and Quality . . . accept of the place and title of Protector."

He proceeds then to remind them that all public functionaries have acknowledged his authority to give them commissions, and due powers to perform their duties, and that they themselves, the members of Parliament before him, have procured their places in Parliament by virtue of the writs issued in his name, and, further, have signed the "Indenture" containing the proviso, "That the Persons so chosen should not have power to alter the Government as now settled in one Single Person and a Parliament."

So far he had been conciliatory, relying on their

common sense, and the obvious truth of what he had said to prove his case. Then follows a protest against there being any reason why his authority as Protector should not, in the circumstances in which it has been given him, "balance this Providence, in the sight of God, with *any* Hereditary Interest; as a thing less subject to those cracks and flaws which that is commonly incident to; the disputing of which has cost more blood in former times in this Nation than we have leisure to speak of now!"

This thought—that he has a good title to his position—grows upon him, and his tone changes.

"For you to disown, or not to own it (the authority); for you to act with Parliamentary Authority especially in the disowning of it; contrary to the very fundamental things, yea, against the very root itself of this Establishment: to sit, and not own the Authority by which you sit, is that which I believe astonisheth more men than myself; and doth as dangerously disappoint and discompose the Nation as anything could have been invented by the greatest enemy to our peace and welfare, or could well have happened."

On this ground Cromwell took his stand. He had become convinced that this thing was not only right, but necessary for the peace of the nation, and the proper ordering of affairs. Therefore it must not be disputed by any one. Parliament must now be taught its duty, as it had not had the sense to do it without. Every member of Parliament, before he could again take his seat, had to sign the following agreement:—

"I do hereby freely promise, and engage myself, to be true and faithful to the Lord Protector and the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland; and shall

not (according to the tenor of the Indenture whereby I am returned to serve in this present Parliament) propose, or give my consent, to alter the Government as it is settled in a Single Person and a Parliament."

A high-handed measure, which many people think nothing could justify. It may be so. Cromwell detested having to do it. But to his mind there was no alternative.

"I would it had not been needful for me to call you hither to expostulate these things with you, and in such a manner as this! But Necessity has no law. Feigned necessities, imaginary necessities, are the greatest cozenage that man can put upon the Providence of God, and make pretences to break down rules by; but it is as legal, as carnal, and as stupid to think that there are no Necessities which are manifest because necessities may be abused or feigned! . . I have to say: The wilful throwing away of this Government, such as it is, so owned by God, so approved by men, so witnessed (in the Fundamentals of it) as was mentioned above, and in reference to the good of these Nations and of Posterity, I can sooner be willing to be rolled into my grave, and buried with infamy, than I can give my consent unto!"

He finally dismisses the members of Parliament with these significant words:—

"You have absolute Legislative Power in all things that can possibly concern the good and interest of the public; and I think you may make these Nations happy by this Settlement. And I, for my part, shall be willing to be bound more than I am, in anything concerning which I can become convinced that it may be for the good of the People, or tend to the preservation of the Cause and Interest so long contended for."

In such wise did Cromwell defend his position, the limit to the liberty of Parliament which he imposed now, and the restriction upon the liberty of the subject which he imposed later on by means of the Major-Generals.

It was not his wish—it was against his will—that force should be used to Parliament, or arbitrary taxes authorised. But "necessity" made these things seem inevitable to him.

There is not an action or a word throughout Cromwell's life that gives any evidence that he was by nature an arbitrary man.

Opinions may differ as to whether his "necessities" were real or "feigned"; but that he only proceeded to extremities because he saw nothing else to be done is clearly proven.

For the rest Cromwell was a soldier, surrounded by a council of soldiers. Therefore Englishmen of all classes and political leanings, who then, as now, hated coercion and discipline, objected heartily to his mode of government. But before we fall upon him, and his council, and rend them for "tyranny," we must be prepared to demonstrate that any government, without a sword at its side ready to be drawn, could have held England together for a month at that time.

We doubt it; and until some far more conclusive proof than we have seen yet, that such a thing was possible, as well as desirable, is brought forward, it would seem to us that Cromwell and his officers were right.

CHAPTER XXIX

It was not to be expected that any mercy would be shown to Cromwell's private life by the critics who had nothing too bad to say of him as Protector. Yet, strangely enough, though the Royalist lampooners expended an unpleasant and unsavoury portion of their vocabularies in depicting the debaucheries of "the usurper" in his early youth, their accounts of any irregularities in the days of his power are meagre in the extreme. This "negative evidence" is perhaps the best proof we need that Cromwell was one of the cleanest-minded and most sober-living men of his day. There are, of course, stories to be told that he was assiduous in his attentions to Lady This and Mistress That, and that Mrs. Cromwell was jealous. But there is no spirit in the telling of the scandals. They never received any credence, apparently, among intelligent people of the time, and when repeated by Noble and other gossiping chroniclers of private Cromwell history, are taken for granted rather because the writers were unable to conceive any man being above such weaknesses, than that the tales were believed.

Cromwell's early life and his faithful love for his wife have been dealt with already. As a father he was full of tenderness and careful thoughtfulness, treating all his children with justice and affection, but never blinding his eyes to their follies and weaknesses. His letters of admonition to Richard Cromwell, the future Protector, are well known. This youth was not fond of serious sub-

jects. A cheerful soul, of healthy country tastes, there was nothing to complain of him morally. But he had no capacity for the government of men and the ordering of public affairs. Cromwell tried to impress him with the gravity of life, and placed him in some minor positions of public trust. But we never hear anything of him except as Cromwell's son, until he became Protector. Mrs. Hutchinson in her "Memoirs" calls him "A peasant in his nature, yet gentle and virtuous, but became not greatness." High praise indeed from this good but extremely particular and prejudiced lady.

Henry, the second living son, who rose to be Deputy for Ireland, was treated by his father with the same solicitude and affection, and advised with gentle yet pointed warning against his besetting weaknesses and temptations. We quote one letter, written during the Protectorate, typical of others. It was addressed to him when he was Major-General of the army in Ireland, a position he had won by his ability and strength of character. Yet he suffered much at the hands of private scandal-mongers, some of whose reports had evidently reached his father, and had been commented on. Mrs. Hutchinson talks of Henry as a "debauched cavalier," but there is no direct evidence of this, and it is significant that young Cromwell's political enemies make no mention of it. His father, at any rate, was not a man easily hoodwinked in such matters.

"*For my son* HARRY CROMWELL.[1]

"WHITEHALL, 21*st April* 1656.

"HARRY,—I have received your Letters, and have also seen some from you to others; and am sufficiently

[1] Carlyle, Part ix. p. 138.

satisfied of your burden, and that if the Lord be not with you, to enable you to bear it, you are in a very sad condition.

"I am glad to hear what I have heard of your carriage; study still to be innocent, and to answer every occasion, roll yourself upon God, which to do needs much grace. Cry to the Lord to give you a plain single heart. Take heed of being over-jealous, lest your apprehensions of others cause you to offend. Know that uprightness will preserve you; in this be confident against men.

"I think the Anabaptists are to blame in not being pleased with you. That's their fault! It will not reach *you*, whilst you with singleness of heart make the glory of the Lord your aim. Take heed of professing religion without the power; that will teach you to love all who are after the similitude of Christ. Take care of making it a business to be too hard for the men who contest with you. Being over-concerned may train you into a snare. I have to do with these poor men; and am not without my exercise. I know they are weak; because they are so peremptory in judging others. I quarrel not with them, but in their seeking to supplant others; which is done by some, first by branding them with antichristianism, and then taking away their maintenance.

"Be not troubled with the late Business; we understand the men. Do not fear the sending of any over to you but such as will be considering men, loving all godly interests, and men (that) will be friends to justice. Lastly, take heed of studying to lay for yourself the foundation of a great estate. It will be a snare to you; they will watch you; bad men will be confirmed in covetousness. The thing is an evil which God abhors. I pray you think of me in this.

"If the Lord did not sustain me, I were undone; but I live and I shall live, to the pleasure of His grace; I find mercy at need. The God of all grace keep you. I rest,

"Your loving father,

"OLIVER P."

The last sentences in this letter lead us back to Cromwell himself. He had played a strange succession of parts in his life, but this of Protector was strangest of all. Farmer and landowner; justice of the peace, and member of Parliament for a small borough; captain of a troop; colonel of a regiment; commander of a small army; and chief organiser of a complicated system of local volunteer defence. Then Lieutenant-General, and acknowledged authority in all things appertaining to cavalry, an active political leader at the same time, and champion of the unpopular cause of religious freedom. Then General in sole command of fifteen thousand men, reducing to submission a determined foe fighting in his own country. Next becoming the only power in the land able to prevent military anarchy on the one hand, and corruption and intolerance on the other. Last of all, by every natural right that man could possess, elected Lord Protector of this Commonwealth of England.

It is not easy to obtain a true picture of the private life of such a man. There are accounts in plenty, but most of them are court tittle-tattle of the most foolish and acrimonious kind. Here and there, however, an account in an old newspaper, a passage in a private letter, a descriptive touch in the letter of a foreign ambassador to his court, gives us a sudden vivid glimpse into

the family circle, and the daily round of labour of this man of many burdens, in the last, and most memorable, years of his life.

The first impression received from what we read, is that with this change of station, Cromwell's whole conception of life changed too. The tithe-farmer of Ely, whose family, in 1646, probably used one common sitting-room, and slept two in a chamber, accepted at the hands of the Council of State, in March 1654, the mansion of Hampton Court, with all its parks and lands, and as a town residence the royal palace of Whitehall. In December 1654, Cromwell was given as minor dwelling-places, should he desire change, St. James's House and Park, Windsor Castle, The Mews, Somerset House, Greenwich House and Park, and York Manor, and though he never lived anywhere except at Whitehall and Hampton, the change in eight years from a small house to two palaces is startling enough in a Puritan soldier. These palaces meant retinues of servants: grand receptions and entertainments, and the modelling the whole of his life on the basis of the monarch of a kingdom by hereditary right, rather than a man of the people elected to office for life.

The money granted to defray his expenses, beginning at £64,000 per annum, became, finally, £100,000, and out of this sum, large as it was, there is no evidence that Cromwell or his family ever saved a penny.

It can easily be imagined how the Republicans murmured at this state of things, and that this grandeur was pointed to as conclusive evidence that Cromwell had played a selfish, ambitious game in becoming Protector, and was now greedily enjoying the fruits of his intrigues.

In an invaluable little article entitled "The Court of

Cromwell,"[1] Mr. C. H. Firth gives us side by side a Royalist and a Republican account of the matter.

"Now," wrote Sir Philip Warwick, "he models his house that it might have some resemblance to a Court, and his liveries, lackies, and yeomen of the guard are known whom they belong to by this habit."

Mrs. Hutchinson said, "His Court was full of sin and vanity, and the more abominable, because they had not yet quite cast away the name of God, but profaned it by taking it in vain upon them."

There was a Lord Chamberlain, Sir Gilbert Pickering, and a Comptroller of the Household, a "Master of the Horse"—Claypole, the husband of "Lady Betty," Cromwell's second daughter, having this place—a purely ornamental appointment. At ceremonials of State there was great splendour.

The Ambassador of the French, Bordeaux, in March 1654, when landing at Tower Wharf, was placed "in the Lord Protector's rich coach, attended by Sir Oliver Fleming (official master of ceremonies), and his Highness's coachman and postillion, and ten of his pages in the Lord Protector's liveries, and the Lord Ambassador's pages in his liveries."

The receptions of Ambassadors by the Protector in person were very gorgeous. "If Cromwell had been King," Mr. Firth observes, "more state could hardly have been observed." Occasionally great banquets were given. On February 2, 1657, Cromwell entertained the whole of the Parliament. It was a day of public thanksgiving for a serious plot against his life having been frustrated.

"After the sermons, the Speaker and members of Parliament repaired to Whitehall to dine with his High-

[1] *Cornhill*, Sept. 1897.

ness, who gave them in the banqueting-house a most princely entertainment. After dinner his Highness withdrew to the Cock-pit, and there entertained them with rare music, both of instruments and voices, till the evening."

This account, and the reports of the festivities at the weddings of his daughters Frances and Mary, dispose of much ancient tradition as to the cold formality and dead-aliveness of the Puritan period.

Cromwell hunted, and went a-hawking, when he could spare the time, and was passionately fond of all good music, and "entertained the most skilful in that science in his pay and family." A quaint fact appears in this connection,—interesting, but not complimentary to the profession.

A distinguished musician, says Mr. Firth, was "appointed organist to the Protector, and music master to his daughters at a salary of £100 per annum."

But music was not the only recreation taken at Whitehall, or in the country at large. At the wedding of Frances Cromwell, who married the grandson of the Earl of Warwick—

"They had forty-eight violins and much mirth and frolic, besides much dancing (a thing here-to-fore accounted profane) till five of the clock yesterday morning. Amongst the dancers there was the Earl of Newport, who danced with her Highness."

So even poor Mrs. Cromwell had to bear her part. Of course many Puritans were scandalised. But the fact is placed beyond doubt, that no outcry against harmless amusements came from Cromwell personally.

In such manner as this was the Protector's "Court" conducted. No breath of scandal from any worthy or

reliable source rests on him, his family, or his "courtiers," as his supporters were called by the Republicans. Further, when this life of Oliver's is examined at close quarters, it soon appears that the grandeur and display—the lackeys, pages, coaches, and the rest of it—were assumed for a definite purpose: put on, and worn with the best grace he could, as he had once put on his armour for battle, and now donned the velvet and lace. But they were not his choice. When no banquets were necessary, Cromwell lived plainly, his food "was spare and not curious." . . . "At his private table very rarely, or never, were our French *quelque-choses* suffered by him, or any such modern gustos."

It is also stated that his favourite liquor was "a very small ale of seven-and-sixpence a barrel, well boiled, and well tasted, and well conditioned, called and known by the name of 'Morning Dew' (from the brewer's name as I have heard").

In his dealings with men there was the same careful formality in public, and in private the simplicity and courtesy of an ordinary gentleman conducting business.

Sagredo, Envoy from Venice, wrote of a private interview: "He met me in the middle of the room, and on my departure he accompanied me to the door."

Whitelock, in his journal, thus describes Cromwell when with a few friends and councillors: "He would sometimes be very cheerful with us, and, laying aside his greatness, he would be exceeding familiar with us, and by way of diversion would make verse with us, and every one must try his fancy. He commonly called for tobacco, pipes, and a candle, and would now and then take tobacco himself: then he would fall again into his serious and great business."

The purpose in Cromwell's mind when he accepted the state offered by his Council was, that if England were to remain a great and respected power among Continental nations, her representative must show a "pomp and ceremony" in all his public life and relations with his Parliament and officers, and especially with the ambassadors of foreign countries, which would compare favourably with the courts of neighbouring sovereigns. He spared no expense to this end; he refused to listen to the sneers of enemies and the murmurs of friends. It was the course he had marked out as the right one, therefore he held to it to the end.

A commentator writes, after criticising the expense to the public, of the "court":—

"I find others who know what greatness is of nobler and freer minds, and live nearer to it, say that there is nothing but what hath been ordinary amongst noble persons, not the tenth of what expense hath formerly been, and no more than is necessary for the honour of this English nation."

This, we believe, will be the sober judgment of history.

Cromwell never became King; he was strongly pressed by Parliament, especially by the constitutional lawyers. But the majority of the officers in the Council of State and in the army were against it; and after long hesitation he refused the crown. His exact reasons will, perhaps, never be known. That he refused from motives of personal fear of his officers is absurd. His position was far too secure to render their support vitally necessary, and he had shown before, often enough, that when he believed any course to be his duty he would follow it and brave any obloquy. The fact would appear to be that, finding

the men he trusted most, and who had been his best and truest friends, entirely against the idea, he made up his mind that unless there was an overmastering necessity for the step it was not worth the price.

[1] "But I may say a word to another thing which doth a little pinch upon me: That it is my duty (to accept the title). I think it can be no man's duty but between God and himself, if he be conscious of his own infirmities, disabilities, and weakness: (conscious) that he perhaps is not able to encounter with it, although he may have a little faith too for a little exercise."

In this matter of kingship Cromwell searched in vain for the "duty" which would justify him in sweeping Desborow, Fleetwood, and others aside. Therefore he dismissed it finally from his mind.

"Every man who is to give an account to God of his actions, he must in some measure be able to prove his own work, and to have an approbation in his own conscience of that which he is to do or to forbear. . . .

". . . But truly this is my Answer, that . . . I should not be an honest man if I did not tell you that I cannot accept of the Government, nor undertake the trouble and charge of it — as to which I have a little more experimented than everybody what troubles and difficulties do befall men under such trusts and in such undertakings. I say I am persuaded to return this Answer to you, That I cannot undertake the Government with the Title of King. And that is mine Answer to this great and weighty Business."

In the year 1658 calamity and bereavement came upon the house of Cromwell. Frances, only four months married, lost her husband, Mr. Rich, in February, and on

[1] Carlyle, Part x. pp. 261, 300–1.

the 6th of August Elizabeth Claypole, "Betty," Cromwell's favourite daughter, died after a terrible illness, in which she suffered lingering agonies of pain. Her father seldom left her after she fell sick.

[1] "For the last fourteen days his Highness has been by her bedside at Hampton Court, unable to attend to public business whatever," wrote Thurloe.

The sight of his daughter's sufferings gave, it is supposed, a shock to Cromwell's nervous system, already weakened by the many years of overwork and over-anxiety, from which it could not rally. Not long afterwards George Fox, the Quaker, records in his journal:—

"I met him riding into Hampton Court Park, and before I came to him, as he rode at the head of his Lifeguard, I saw and felt a waft of death go forth against him, and when I came to him he looked like a dead man."

On Saturday, 21st of August, Cromwell began to sicken of "tertian ague," his old enemy; and each day grew worse and worse. The doctors came and went, and laboured their best. Ministers prayed aloud to God to spare him, and believed that they must be successful. But all was in vain. The Protector of Puritan England, the bulwark of the Cause, was dying. And on the 3rd of September, at three o'clock in the afternoon, he passed away.

On that day died the power of the Commonwealth, which Cromwell had nursed in his strong arms. It arose with him, and must have died at his death even had he lived many more years.

Hampered as Cromwell was, checked and thwarted by his Council of State in a hundred ways that we

[1] Thurloe, vii. 295.

shall never know, and can only dimly guess, yet his hand guided the nation through its hours of peril. His indomitable will, unerring judgment, and unfailing patience held together like a mighty iron band the discordant elements within the nation. This band broken, the government of the realm fell to pieces.

There was no one in the land who might take up the burden and fill the place of Oliver Cromwell.

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